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Bachelors



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Bachelors.

A COMEDY

In Four Acts.

BY

ZARMAR.

NEW YORK:
PRINTED BY E. L. HAMILTON & CO.,
12 BARCLAY STREET.

1900.

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*in the
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1900*

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

COLONEL WATSON.
CAPTAIN DAUBRAY.
MRS. REMFREY.
MRS. MACLIN.
MISS MILLINGTON.
MRS. TOMLINSON.
WAITER.
MRS. POLLIVER.
MR. FOTHERWAY.
SERVANT.

Time.—The present. A month elapses between Act I and Act II; seven days between Act II and Act III; and two days between Act III and Act IV.

PERSONAGES.

(Description of their Appearance.)

COLONEL WATSON, aged forty, is a big, active, robust man, but not coarse looking. His hair is touched with grey ; and his moustache is large and full. His voice is deep and martial ; and the address and vigor of his personality are striking.

CAPTAIN DAUBRAY, aged thirty, is a tall, handsome, dashing, athletic fellow, with a strong, clear, resonant voice.

MRS. REMFREY, aged forty-four, impresses one as a graceful woman ; the orthodox English lady.

MRS. MACLIN, aged thirty-three, is a sweet, plump, pretty woman, with large, expressive eyes, sparkling with vivacity.

EDITH MILLINGTON, aged twenty-four, is in the bloom of young womanhood, with girlish innocence and ingenuousness.

MRS. TOMLINSON is a bright, pretty woman, aged thirty-four.

THE WAITER, aged thirty-two, is a Frenchman who has lived a number of years in London.

MRS POLLIVER, aged thirty-eight, is stout and good-looking.

MR FOTHERWAY, aged twenty-five, is affected in dress and manner.

ACT I.

Scene.—A Dining-Room in a Fashionable
London Hotel.

It is an upstairs dining-room ; and through its four great windows a picturesque view of London presents itself to audience.

The time is after usual luncheon hour, and at the rise of the curtain Colonel Watson is the sole person at table.

Colonel Watson and Captain Daubray are in civilian dress. It is a clear, sunny day in early spring.

“ A ” is the entrance to the dining-room, and is on the same wall as the windows.

BACHELORS.

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS BY ZARMAR.

ACT 1.

Scene.—A dining-room in a fashionable hotel.

Time.—After usual luncheon hour.

(Colonel Watson is discovered in position shown. He is delightedly eating roast pigeon.)

WAITER.

Zey tell me, sair, you shoot wondairful ! Grass ze bird ze instant he leave ze trap. Fifty bird in succession ! It is pairfect !

COLONEL.

Result of sea bathing. (The waiter shrugs his shoulders, turns up his eyes, and steps back to his position.)

WAITER (aside).

So he tells ze papers. But I know. Ze fools ! Do zey expect ze Colonel to hang upon ze triggair

when his dinnair fly away from him ? (Captain Daubray enters and sits on seat No. 1. Waiter hands menu to him.)

CAPTAIN.

Chicken broth. (While the waiter is away, the Captain eyes the Colonel, who is wholly occupied with his pigeon.) Hullo ! he looks prosperous enough to have many interests in the welfare of the nation. Very likely he'd know if there's any truth in the rumor ; I'd ask him if I could catch his eye. (The Captain manœuvres to do so, but without effect.) No use ! he's too fond of pigeon. (Waiter returns with broth ; sets it and steps back to his position. The Captain, between sips, eyes the Colonel.) It's a case of watch and wait. (He gets his opportunity.) Excuse me, sir, I've just arrived in London ; can you tell me, has Russia declared war ? (The Colonel, after momentarily glancing at Daubray, has continued his lunch. Now, in answer, he holds up the forefinger of his right-hand, perpendicularly. The waiter, at this signal, comes briskly forward to Captain.)

WAITER.

Pardon Monsieur ! Ze gentilmon he nevair talk while having luncheon.

CAPTAIN (rather discomfited).

I beg the gentleman's pardon. (Waiter returns to his position.) (Aside.) I wonder who and what he is ! It's strange that he would not answer

that question. Perhaps he's dumb. No, he does not look dumb. On the contrary, if he were a trifle fatter I'd take him to be a star tenor. I'm curious anyhow (Turning to waiter.) Waiter!

WAITER.

Sair! (He comes forward and the Captain tips him.) Thank you, sair!

CAPTAIN.

What is that gentleman—a philosopher, or a barbarian? (Sips broth.)

WAITER.

Ah, Monsieur, no! He is a bachelor.

CAPTAIN.

A bachelor? (Pausing with spoon.)

WAITER (slowly, ostentatiously).

Ze king of ze bachelors! Ze Celibate of London!

CAPTAIN (putting down spoon).

Great Scott!

WAITER (expostulatingly).

Non! Non!—Colonel Watson.

CAPTAIN.

His name! Colonel Watson. Oh yes? But who gave him the other names? not his god-mother; no woman could look that far ahead!

WAITER.

He say it of himself.

CAPTAIN.

Oh—h—h !

WAITER.

And marriage, he say, is ze rich man's weakness and ze poor man's folly. (Excitedly.) In marriage, he say,—Ze woman buy, and ze man—he pay ! It is ze diffaironce ! and he is right !

CAPTAIN.

Ha ! I see that you are a bachelor, too, Waiter ?

WAITER.

Non ! Non ! alas ! married ! Unfortunate, I know from expairionce—*Expairionce ze mastair !*

CAPTAIN,

Oh, it's not as bad as that surely ? (Waiter shrugs shoulders disconsolately.) How does Colonel Watson know so much then ?

WAITER (tapping forehead with right forefinger). From ze reason—ze bachelor's divine intelligence.

CAPTAIN (aside).

That's good. (To waiter.) And he calls himself the Celibate of London ?

WAITER.

Yes, sair ; he ogle every woman who come within a mile of him. (The waiter must not here imitate Colonel's action or manner.)

CAPTAIN.

Ha ! he's evidently an artist as well then ?

WAITER.

Non, non ! he only admire. Then—Ta Ta !
Ha Ha !—Ta ! Ta !—Ha ! Ha !

CAPTAIN.

Do you know why he wouldn't speak just now ?

WAITER.

If Monsieur say one word for ze British Army, one word for ze table, and one word against marriage—he answer Monsieur and is Monsieur's friend in confidence for evair.

CAPTAIN.

One word, you say ?

WAITER.

Monsieur, it is all one word. Ze Army—First !—Ze table — Heaven ! — Marriage ! (He gives a shrug and gesture of despair and points his right thumb down with fist closed.)

CAPTAIN (looking at Colonel, who has suddenly dropped knife and fork, thrust eye-glass to eye, and spun half round to look at entrance A.)

What is the matter with the Army? (Enter Mrs. Polliver and Mrs. Tomlinson.) Good Lord! he heard the rustle of the skirts!—my rascal—the Celibate!

MRS. POLLIVER.

I left my card-case behind me, waiter. (Mrs. Polliver, who is very gaily dressed, advances, but Mrs. Tomlinson immediately turns and looks out of window.)

WAITER (very politely).

Oh—Madame!—where did Madame sit? (He goes towards table at left centre, Mrs. Polliver following.)

CAPTAIN.

By Jove! it's Jess! (He rises and goes over to Mrs. Tomlinson, who has not seen him. He gets right up to her before he speaks.) How do you do, Mrs. Tomlinson?

MRS. TOMLINSON (turning quickly with exclamation.)

Jack! you! (Shaking hands.) My dear brave noble soldier!—safe home again.

CAPTAIN.

Are you staying here?

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Don't speak loudly—the heavy brute at the table knows my husband and I can feel his eyes upon me. (They talk quietly, Colonel watching

them, with his back to Mrs. Polliver and waiter. Mrs. Polliver stands at left centre, fanning herself with handkerchief.)

MRS. POLLIVER.

Dear me! the Colonel won't look. I'll pull his ear. (She coughs and tries to attract Colonel's notice)

WAITER (who is behind her, looks at her, and marks his speech with expression of eyes and eyebrows and gestures).

Ze handkerchief!—Oh—h!—ze pairfume—Oh—h—h!—ze hat—Oh—h!—ze bodice. (Mrs. Polliver raises skirt to pick thread off.) Ze skirt, ze petticoat, ze boot, ze stocking—beautiful! beautiful!—but I think of ze poor devil who pay for it. (He draws card-case from his pocket.)

MRS. POLLIVER. (without turning).

Have you found it, waiter?

WAITER (coming forward).

I have, Madame. (Presenting it with profound bow.) On ze floor under Madame's chair.

MRS. POLLIVER.

Thank you, waiter. (She gives him a tip; waiter bows acknowledgment; she walks quickly past Colonel, making eyes at him and smiling in marked manner.) I've found it, Mrs. Tomlinson.

MRS. TOMLINSON.

That's fortunate, Mrs. Polliver. (Extending her hand and speaking with formal politeness.) Good-bye, Captain Daubray.

CAPTAIN (shaking her hand and speaking with formal politeness).

Good-bye, Mrs. Tomlinson.

MRS. TOMLINSON (gaily).

It's our lucky day, Mrs. Polliver ; we must go and back a horse. (As they pass out the Colonel looks past Daubray at them.)

CAPTAIN (aside).

Doesn't he eye them ?—why it's my chance to distinguish myself ! (Steps towards Colonel, who is still looking at door through which ladies have vanished.) I presume, sir, by the way you look after the ladies that you are a bachelor ; every time I see a beauty, I thank my stars that *I* am a bachelor. (The Colonel, hearing this, beams smiles for six or seven seconds ; then rises deliberately, and comes towards Captain.)

WAITER.

He ! it is done ! he has pulled his leg !

COLONEL (with urbanity).

I must apologize to you, sir, for not answering you just now, but the fact is that one so—so—seldom meets with an intelligent companion.

CAPTAIN.

Real bachelors are rare !

COLONEL.

I am Colonel Watson of the 25th Lancers. May I have the honor of hearing your name, sir ? It's my misfortune to be a stranger to you.

CAPTAIN.

Captain John Daubray—11th Dragoons.

COLONEL.

Even a more delightful privilege than I had hoped for. I know your father well, though I have not had five minutes' conversation with him for years. And I knew your mother too, Captain Daubray—a rare woman ; one woman in a million !—and I've known Mrs. Remfrey, your mother's sister, since my mid-summer holidays, twenty-eight years ago. She adopted you when your mother died. You were the one child ! your aunt was childless herself.

CAPTAIN.

Indeed ! you know my family well, sir ! It's curious that we haven't met before.

COLONEL.

Well, my regiment, like yours, has been here, there, everywhere on service ; and we've been dodging one another apparently—the last few years I've been regularly in London, and you've been quite out of London.

CAPTAIN.

Yes—India and Africa.

COLONEL.

That accounts for it. Couldn't we lunch together? May I have the honor? At my table, Captain Daubray.

CAPTAIN.

I shall be very pleased, sir. (They seat themselves at the Colonel's table.)

WAITER (aside).

Zey get on very fast!—Ah! (Tapping forehead with forefinger.) Ze Captain is a young Colonel.

COLONEL (beaming).

This is a great pleasure to me, Captain Daubray. Will you try one of my pigeons?—I selected them with my gun at the club grounds.

CAPTAIN.

A treat indeed! Thank you.

COLONEL.

Waiter!

WAITER.

Yes, sair.

COLONEL (softly).

A pair of my pigeons, and you know my brand.

WAITER.

Yes, sair. (Exit.)

COLONEL.

This hotel, Captain Daubray, has an excellent chef. Yesterday I had a duck here—a perfect poem. I thought about it first thing this morning when I awoke. It's so refreshing, I think, to begin the day with a happy remembrance—but I must apologize for not answering your question about the war.

CAPTAIN.

Oh yes!

COLONEL.

There is no news that I am aware of. This morning the opinion was gaining ground that the trouble would be settled by diplomacy.

CAPTAIN.

I see; victory by politeness.

COLONEL.

Ha, ha! Yes! And you've just returned to London?

CAPTAIN.

Yes, I received a wound (touching his shoulder) in Africa, that invalided me. So I've been in Australia for the past six months, recuperating. The mountain climate there is superb, and now I'm as fit as ever.

COLONEL.

I congratulate you, most heartily, on being perfectly well again. (Enter waiter with pigeons and wine.)

CAPTAIN.

Thank you, sir. (Waiter sets dishes.)

COLONEL (eyeing pigeon).

Ah—h—h! (They proceed with luncheon.) And what is Australia like, Daubray? I mean from *our* point of view.

CAPTAIN.

There are two good hotels there, and sometimes one of the clubs has a cook.

COLONEL.

Hm! no Paradise! But the ladies of Australia? Is a man worried there as he is here?

CAPTAIN.

There, as here, the unmarried woman is the trouble of the age. At every turn, it's marry me! marry me! marry me! marry me!

COLONEL.

Yah! as I expected! these women are everywhere. And I understand that the Australians are peculiar women too!—they want the franchise!—they are thorough kickers!

CAPTAIN.

Their motto is—"Commandeer the breeches."

COLONEL.

Yah! Before marriage as after. The home women you see are too subtle for that. They wait until they have their patient dupe harnessed to the marriage plough before they jump upon his head and crow. And that's the policy of the artful American women too! But of course America is the henpecked nation. (Pours Daubray and himself more wine.)

WAITER (aside).

Ze French! (Shrug and gesture.) Before marriage—(imitating cat rubbing head on sleeve) Purr! Purr! Purr! After marriage (spitting as cat does) St! St! St! Ze cat and ze dog!

CAPTAIN.

Woman's Love!

COLONEL.

Love isn't love, Daubray. Love is the war that women wage upon men; and marriage is woman's protest against the happiness of bachelors.

CAPTAIN.

They succeed in their protest to an alarming degree. I've often said that the world is managed by plausible-tongued women.

COLONEL.

They sit down and scheme—these women do—scheme how to entrap some good fellow who is generous enough to believe in them.

CAPTAIN.

Undoubtedly, their object in life is to pull men over to their point of view ; that's why it's a grievous mistake to underrate them.

COLONEL.

I know it, Duabray ; I've seen a woman in a lawsuit win £10,000 by one modest look at the judge. Oh, after luncheon remind me, and I'll tell you the story of a little scented handkerchief. It's just the thing over coffee and cigars. A married woman of fifty told it to me.

CAPTAIN.

Ha !

COLONEL.

But as you were alone for six months with woman suffragists in Australia, you won't mind me asking you—did you escape divorce and breach of promise ?

CAPTAIN.

Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! Thoroughly.

COLONEL.

You must be gifted ; for there must have been many nice women amongst them.

CAPTAIN.

I feel that I *was* lucky.

COLONEL.

Very lucky and very gifted. You'll perceive that I speak rather feelingly on the subject. The fact is that prior to thirty, my life was a disaster ; I was so healthy and impulsive. No divorce cases, but three breaches of promise !—£18,500. After thirty, I had the advantage of experience ; or as Victor Hugo says, before thirty, the dupe ; after thirty, the rogue !

CAPTAIN.

The chaperons in Australia put it this way :—Catch a man before he's thirty. After thirty he knows too much.

COLONEL.

At twenty, we men go up town to look at the girls. At thirty we go up there also to bank our money.

CAPTAIN.

Yesterday I reached thirty—the age of discretion.

COLONEL.

Discretion is the word. Love a woman, and ever after she will consider that you and yours belong to her.

CAPTAIN.

That reminds me of the Major of my regiment. "Are you married?" he said to me. "No," I answered. "Lucky man," said he.

"Why," I asked. "You don't know why," he replied, "but I do."

COLONEL.

There's a world of solemn meaning in that, Daubray—a world of solemn warning—but it just occurs to me to tell you where you can be sure of getting the best game.

CAPTAIN.

Harkington's?

COLONEL.

Oh, no! The last time I went there I had the electric light put into my stomach! Two doctors! I couldn't take a square meal for several months afterwards. No, Smithson's is the place; it's a new place, ten doors below Harkington's, going from here.

CAPTAIN.

Thank you, Colonel. It's a good thing to know, when the other place is so serious.

COLONEL.

Where will you be staying in London, Daubray?

CAPTAIN.

Here, most of my time.

COLONEL.

Charming! We shall see each other often, I hope, and have many a good time together.

CAPTAIN.

You may be sure of it, Colonel. I prefer bachelors' society almost to the exclusion of other men.

COLONEL.

Naturally! Bachelors are happier, lighter, brisker, brighter. Look at me! I never lose my health, appetite, cheerfulness, self-confidence, or self-respect, due entirely, I need not say, to my bachelorism. Whereas, a married man never can enjoy a meal, or feel free to say that his life will be worth living to-morrow. Yes, Daubray, no matter how the married world may bluff and talk, nevertheless the fact remains, that bachelorism is the elixir of life. (Drinks.)

CAPTAIN.

Every married man is a bachelor at heart.

COLONEL.

The plain fact. The fun we have, Daubray—the fun we have. A bachelor can fall in love with whom he likes without incurring the displeasure of his family. Hm! Daubray—Hm!—Isn't that the size of it?

CAPTAIN.

Ha! Ha! Ha! and then when she begins to bore him he can go away and love somebody else. The way I understand it, Colonel, is this:—Bachelorism is the free and easy life, and all the ladies like you. Bachelorism is love and cham-

pagne ; marriage, respectability and soda. And one can whisper too that the bachelor has all the advantage of correct and—*incorrect* behavior on the part of other people without having to be correct himself.

COLONEL.

Yah ! Ha ! Exactly ! Yah ! Though of course one dares not say so to one's married friends ; because, don't you see, all the orthodox ideas are established by henpecked men, and the laws are made by henpecked men, and judges, counsel, and jury are henpecked men. And a Parliament of henpecked men might tax us heavily at any moment.

CAPTAIN.

Yes ! Everywhere we turn, the attitude of the married towards the unmarried men is, *we* are in the soup ; therefore *you* should be in it also. (As the Captain begins this last speech, Mrs. Remfrey enters and ejaculating "Oh !" comes running down the room. And before the Colonel or Captain is aware of her presence, and just as the Captain finishes the word "also" she throws her arms around the Captain's neck.)

MRS. REMFREY (kissing Captain).

My darling boy !

CAPTAIN (taken aback but delighted).

Aunt ! (Rises.)

MRS. REMFREY (stiffly, as Colonel rises).

Good afternoon, Colonel Watson!

COLONEL (formally, politely).

Good afternoon, Mrs. Remfrey!

(Mrs. Remfrey takes hold of Captain's hands, one in each of hers, and kisses him again. As she does so the waiter speaks quickly and aside.)

WAITER (aside).

Parbleau! she love him! Ze Colonel will bite ze glass! (Withdraws.)

MRS. REMFREY (speaking hysterically, and running on without waiting for answer).

My darling boy! My friends and I went to the railway to meet you, but a dozen extraordinary blocks and mishaps made us late. You are looking remarkably well! I'm in raptures at seeing you again! The porter told us where you'd gone. You dear! Let me look at you! (The Colonel during this speech has stepped a few paces away, and speaks his asides with face averted from Mrs. Remfrey and Captain.)

COLONEL (aside).

Yah! Annie Remfrey always was a gusher and a scene maker.

MRS. REMFREY (in the same hysterical manner).

There's no need to say that you've quite recovered from your wound.

CAPTAIN.

And now that I've recovered from my surprise, Aunt, I can——

MRS. REMFREV (hysterically interrupting).

John, dear! You are not angry with me because I'm a little demonstrative? There's nobody here; see, the room is empty! Besides, I'm your foster-mother.

CAPTAIN.

My dear Aunt, how could I get angry at anything that you did?

MRS. REMFREV.

Still, I know that you were always adverse to being kissed publicly. But I had to kiss you! Let me look into your eyes. (She holds him by his hands at arm's length for a few moments; then kisses him again; then holds him at arm's length again admiringly.)

COLONEL (aside).

It simply bores me, this sort of thing. She's been the same ever since she was sixteen—kissing!—kissing boys, kissing girls, kissing puppies, kissing kittens, kissing beetles, babies, butterflies. It makes me tired.

CAPTAIN.

You can see, Aunt, that I am brimming with pleasure at seeing you again.

COLONEL (aside).

Too much of a gentleman, as folks say, to shut down on her kissing. A thorough young gentleman this Daubray. I'm immensely taken with him.

CAPTAIN (surveying Mrs. Remfrey).

Aunt, you are looking younger than ever.

COLONEL (aside).

I knew he'd say that. She'll believe it too!

MRS. REMFREY.

Tut! Tut! Tut! John! Don't pamper your Aunt's vanity; though I love to hear you say anything. (Then in deeply earnest voice.) John, dear, it's not true what I've heard—that you were married in Australia?

CAPTAIN (stepping back with expression of astonishment).

Aunt! married? I?

COLONEL (coming forward and speaking with politest tone).

Mrs. Remfrey, the man who marries is the man of small brain—of poor quality!

MRS. REMFREY (with impulsive anger).

Colonel Watson! I perceive that you are anxious to corrupt my nephew!

CAPTAIN (deprecatingly).

Aunt? Aunt! really!

COLONEL (slightly ruffled, but with profuse bow and politeness of tone).

Madam, he is incorruptible. When I had the honor of meeting him just now, I met as steadfast a bachelor as myself.

MRS. REMFREY (angrily).

I protest, Colonel Watson, against your rudeness.

CAPTAIN (interrupting).

Aunt, pardon me for interrupting you; but there is nothing to trouble about. Colonel Watson is prompted by the best of good humor, that's all. And in answer to your question, Aunt, I assure you that (then laughing) I was not married in Australia; Ha! Ha! they never marry in Australia. I am a bachelor. Could I be better?

COLONEL (turning his head aside, and laughing softly).

Ha! Ha! Ha!

MRS. REMFREY (angrily).

Colonel Watson! You are laughing! you might—(Enter Mrs. Maclin and Edith.)

CAPTAIN.

My dear Aunt, forgive me once more. You are taking Colonel Watson with dreadful seriousness.

(At this moment they are joined by Mrs. Maclin and Edith. Mrs. Maclin comes forward to Mrs. Remfrey, but Edith hangs back, four or five paces. Mrs. Maclin interrupts Mrs. Remfrey.)

MRS. MACLIN (touching Mrs. Remfrey's arm on the word "seriousness," and speaking with mirthful vivacity).

Mrs. Remfrey, we felt that we were left in the cold, so we came too.

MRS. REMFREY.

Oh, I'm indeed sorry, Mrs. Maclin ; I'd have—but—never mind, let me introduce you. Colonel Watson, Mrs. Maclin, Miss Millington ; Captain Daubray, Mrs. Maclin, Miss Millington.

MRS. MACLIN.

Has Mrs. Remfrey explained that I was the chief cause of our being late, Captain Daubray ?

CAPTAIN.

Mrs. Remfrey told me that a combination of misfortunes hindered you.

MRS. MACLIN.

Destiny, Captain Daubray. First I tear my skirt ; that delays us fifteen minutes ; then we meet the procession, a mile long ; we turn out of our course ; dart up a side street to escape a fire-engine ; ten minutes of impatience there ; we start again, and an accident happens to our harness.

EDITH.

Yes, it was decreed, Captain Daubray, that we should not meet you at the railway ; although when we started, we had half an hour to spare.

CAPTAIN.

I felt a little disconsolate, I must confess, when I got out of the train, and our old groom Robbs—the porter—gave me the one hand of welcome.

EDITH.

If it had been I, I should have burst out crying on the platform.

MRS. REMFREY.

My dear, don't say that or I shall do it now ! John, dear, your telegram did not arrive in time for us to communicate with your father and uncle. They are away somewhere in Scotland. None of us expected you to come overland, straight home like a carrier pigeon.

CAPTAIN.

No, Aunt, of course you didn't. I always come zig-zag, roundabout, ten days late, even then unexpected.

MRS. MACLIN.

Like our course this morning.

MRS. REMFREY.

Yes, I'm sure you'll consider me a bad guide in London, Mrs. Maclin—that omnibus that blocked us was of itself enough to make you wish yourself back in your beautiful country home.

MRS. MACLIN.

My dear, don't remind me of my beautiful, peaceful country home. Don't remind me of the varied scenery that bewitches the eye from my verandah; or make one allusion to the bracing fresh air. I am worn out with repose and salubrity. Rather give me a London fog, a narrow street, a collision with an omnibus, and a driver who uses language.

MRS. REMFREY.

Ha! Ha! As you like incident, you should enjoy the season this year, for it will be particularly brilliant and exciting. With the army back again, festivity will be the order of the hour.

MRS. MACLIN.

I *shall* enjoy the close air and crowded jostling of a ball-room (stepping to the side of Edith, and a little apart from the others), won't you, Miss Millington? (Colonel, Captain and Mrs. Remfrey talk among themselves.)

EDITH.

I am thinking of there being nobody at the railway to meet Captain Daubray.

MRS. MACLIN.

That seems to be running in your head, my dear. (Laughing kindly.) Ha! Ha! Now that you are Mrs. Remfrey's protégé you should be the first to forget it. (Softly.) Don't blush, dear. (Mrs. Maclin and Edith talk together.)

MRS. REMFREY.

The races to-day week.

CAPTAIN.

Colonel, you'll join our party?

COLONEL.

Delighted, Daubray! (Mrs. Maclin and Edith turn to the others.)

MRS. REMFREY.

Lady Wallace's dance two days after.

CAPTAIN.

What do you say, sir?

COLONEL.

Delighted, Daubray!

EDITH.

Then three other dances, winding up with the big event—the Military and Civil Ball a month hence.

MRS. MACLIN.

Oh ! I want to dance when I think of it. Don't you, Colonel Watson ? (She gives the Colonel an expressive look, on which he and she step aside.)

COLONEL.

I enjoy a good ball, Mrs. Maclin, as well as any man or woman can.

EDITH (pleadingly).

Will you tell us about the campaign, Captain Daubray ? (Mrs. Remfrey, Edith and Captain retire up stage, waiter hurries forward from side, hands chairs to them, they sit; waiter offers to hand Mrs. Maclin a chair.)

MRS. MACLIN.

No, thank you, waiter. (Waiter returns to side.)

MRS. MACLIN.

I'm very glad to meet you, Colonel Watson. I've been hoping for the pleasure some months past.

COLONEL.

I am highly honored; your arrival could not have been more opportune, Mrs Maclin.

MRS. MACLIN (confidingly).

I heard anger in the air ; so I didn't wait at the door any longer.

COLONEL (temporising).

You know then that Mrs. Remfrey and I are old—friends?

MRS. MACLIN.

And enemies. She's the match-maker and you're the match-breaker.

COLONEL.

Neat, indeed! (Aside.) I wonder what she is?—I must put out a feeler. (To her.) Captain Daubray and I—Hm! (Hesitates.)

MRS. MACLIN.

I expect you were having a gay time when we women intruded. I wish I could join you; men's talk is brighter and more interesting than women's.

COLONEL.

Would you say so if you knew that Captain Daubray and I were busy condemning matrimony?

MRS. MACLIN.

Indeed, I would then! I mean that I am no blind advocate of marriage. I've been a widow ten years, and I was married only fourteen months.

COLONEL.

I would like to ask you a question—but I—
(Hesitates.)

MRS. MACLIN.

Oh ? (She looks at him archly.)

COLONEL (aside).

Yah ! a charming mischief ! She's inviting me, I'm sure. Here goes ! (To her.) Mrs. Maclin, do you enjoy your life of single-blessedness ?

MRS. MACLIN.

I'm as happy—as happy as you are !

COLONEL.

Thunder ! shake hands ! You're a bachelor too then, except in sex ?

MRS. MACLIN (giving him the tips of her fingers in a frolicsome way).

Of course I am. And I always wish that I were a man. The world is a grand place for bachelors.

COLONEL.

Splendid ! so there's nothing of the match-making woman about you, Mrs. Maclin ?

MRS. MACLIN (archly, and stepping back).

Colonel Watson ! do I look like a match-making woman ? (She gazes into his eyes.)

COLONEL.

Lord, no ! you do not ! Indeed, Mrs. Maclin, it's a deliciously new experience to meet a lady

who enjoys moving on a man's plane of thought ! Yet you're Mrs. Remfrey's friend, and isn't there a trade unionism amongst women and against men ?

MRS. MACLIN.

To an extent Colonel. But Mrs. Remfrey wouldn't think of obtruding her match-making projects upon my consideration. She and I had a first and final quarrel on that account some five months ago. Since then we have been excellent friends, each keeping clear of a mutually forbidden subject.

COLONEL.

That's a proper and sensible arrangement. Mrs. Remfrey won't compromise with me ; so I don't say twenty words a year to her. Otherwise, I'd have had the pleasure of meeting you earlier.

MRS. MACLIN.

Ah ! but, Colonel, you're her most active enemy. How could she compromise with you ? After young Medway's affair for instance, last season. Mrs. Remfrey had her heart set upon that match. Then Medway met you, and after that—he never met poor Miss Reylton again ! No wonder the sparks flew when Mrs. Remfrey and you clashed just now. Mrs. Remfrey calls you a woman-hater. (Archly.) That's hardly appropriate, is it ?

COLONEL.

I ? Why, I like all women, sensible and silly.

MRS. MACLIN.

Why that distinction, Colonel ?

COLONEL.

The sensible ones to talk to ; the silly ones to flirt with.

MRS. MACLIN.

Colonel ! Colonel ! To which class did the ladies belong who figured in your breach of promise cases ?

COLONEL.

Ha ! Ha ! They were sensible ones who pretended to be silly.

MRS. MACLIN.

So you admit that you were more or less guilty then ?

COLONEL (dubiously).

Hm ! to a trifling extent.

MRS. MACLIN.

All trifling, Colonel, on your part ?

COLONEL.

Ha ! No indeed ! I wish it had been. But you see, I did the paying—and that's no trifling. It's the one who pays who is sincere.

MRS. MACLIN.

Still you were glad to buy your liberty at the price ; for, Colonel, you *do* believe in going alone. You have it in your walk.

COLONEL.

Oh, I know it, Mrs. Maclin. And I am very grateful for the privilege of speaking freely to you. (In rollicking voice.) Ho ! the gay, free gait of the bachelor ! There's nothing like it in the whole world ! I can tell a bachelor from a married man, merely by the way he walks !

MRS. MACLIN.

True, Colonel, true ! You have such a spring in your step. I remarked it to Mrs. Remfrey the first day that I saw you. But it's not your gait that annoys her. It's the way that you put your hat on. "There !" she said, as we saw you pass from a house into the street ; "there is a man who is lost." "Lost ?" I asked. "Yes, dear," she replied ; "lost to us ! He'll never marry ! Look how he puts his hat on !"

COLONEL.

Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! A generous compliment from my enemy. (Turning and looking at Mrs. Remfrey) There she is ; still occupied with Daubray, although we've given her a long time. But as she hasn't seen him for three years, what do you say to taking a turn upon the balcony while she has a second innings ?

MRS. MACLIN.

An excellent suggestion ; though we are keeping you and Captain Daubray from your glass of wine and fun.

COLONEL.

Don't mention it, Mrs. Maclin, don't, please. (As they walk towards door.) We'll be back shortly, Captain Daubray. (Exeunt.)

MRS. REMFREY (coming with Captain and Edith to stage centre and speaking protestingly).

Oh, John ! there's no truer saying than the one about evil communications.

CAPTAIN.

You alarm yourself without reason, Aunt ; the Colonel invited me to lunch with him, and——

MRS. REMFREY.

And gave you the hint just now when he went out. Well, we won't keep you ; especially as you're coming to dinner this evening. But meanwhile let me advise you with regard to him. His own sister told me that he was born with a wicked face.

CAPTAIN.

That's too bitter, Aunt.

MRS. REMFREY.

I cannot express my bitterness at your making a chum of the nasty Colonel. I feel it worse than a wound.

EDITH.

But if Captain Daubray accepts him as a friend, the Colonel must have good qualities. Mrs. Remfrey.

MRS. REMFREY.

Child dear, when I asked Captain Daubray was he married in Australia, the Colonel sniggered like a clown. (She turns her head and thinks in a state of abstraction.)

EDITH (timidly).

You are not married, Captain Daubray ?

CAPTAIN.

No, Miss Millington ; nor has the idea of getting married entered my head as yet.

MRS. REMFREY (turning suddenly).

Oh ! I'd rejoice to see the wretch married. I'd give my ears to see him under the thumb of a strong-minded woman.

CAPTAIN.

Yes, Aunt—to see him with a timid—hunted look

EDITH.

You mean Colonel Watson, Mrs. Remfrey?

MRS. REMFREY.

Child dear, of course I mean the confirmed sinner who spends his time making money, quizzing the dressed birds in the poulterers' shops, and slandering women and marriage.

CAPTAIN.

Aunt, allow me. I've conversed with the Colonel and become rather a friend of his. Like many a man, he's a veteran bachelor. Even so, he has the undeniable right to his own opinions.

MRS. REMFREY.

Yes, but his opinions are his sins, and I cannot forgive them. He has balked more marriages than any thousand gossips—his pet saying is that a woman loses the fool's cap when she marries a man. He's the ruling spirit of the fashionable bachelor set; and our young men take notice of what he says, because he has distinguished himself several times in battle. And so in that way he uses his Victoria Cross as a license to sneer at women. (Pauses.) Oh! it's the ideas!—the ideas!—that he puts into the minds of our young men! I feel it is my duty to hate him.

EDITH.

I am sure that Captain Daubray wouldn't speak unkindly of women, Mrs. Remfrey.

CAPTAIN.

I hold my Aunt's sex in the highest esteem, Miss Millington. Aunt, you're very severe on the Colonel; and yet from what he has told me, I conclude that at least three women have been in love with him.

MRS. REMFREY.

In love with a brute whose idea of romance is—roast goose for supper! What use is such a man to the world? Oh, I'd—oh, I—oh, I'd like to screw his neck!

CAPTAIN.

My Aunt who says her prayers night and morning!

MRS. REMFREY.

I can't keep my feelings under, John! I'm madly vexed at your making a chum of him. When I came here just now I'd have lifted you up in my arms, if I had had the strength, and have carried you away.

CAPTAIN.

Well, Aunt, won't you, for my sake, tolerate him with that formal politeness which is the best way of disagreeing?

MRS. REMFREY.

If you will promise me that you will not be influenced by his bias.

CAPTAIN.

You may rest assured, Aunt, that in this case I will follow my own counsel and not another man's.

MRS. REMFREY.

That is all I would ask, but, John, although you have a shrewd discrimination, still (looking at him lovingly), Colonel Watson is *Colonel Watson*, and I hope you are not attracted to him.

CAPTAIN (lightly laughing the question away).
Aunt!

EDITH.

I should rest quite happy with Captain Daubray's promise, Mrs Remfrey, for doubtless it's the other way—Colonel Watson is attracted to Captain Daubray.

MRS. REMFREY.

It should be so indeed.

CAPTAIN.

Really, if both of you compliment me like this, I shall begin blushing.

EDITH.

Oh, you've done braver deeds than Colonel Watson. (Enter Colonel and Mrs. Maclin.)

MRS. REMFREY.

Child (putting her hand on Edith's), here he is. We'll have to be going, in order to keep Mrs. Maclin's appointment and yours with the photographer.

COLONEL (to Mrs. Maclin).

Daubray will come, I'm certain; then we'll have the half-dozen to make a comfortable theatre party—next Wednesday.

MRS. MACLIN.

Next Wednesday, Colonel.

MRS. REMFREY (softly).

We'll see you at dinner, John—but don't bring him.

CAPTAIN.

I understand, Aunt.

MRS. MACLIN.

Mrs. Remfrey, it's three o'clock; we'll be late again, if we don't go at once.

MRS. REMFREY.

Yes, Mrs. Maclin, I was just remarking the time to Miss Millington. Well, say good-bye for the present, Colonel Watson.

COLONEL.

For the present, Mrs. Remfrey.

MRS. MACLIN (spicily).

Next Wednesday, Colonel Watson.

COLONEL.

Next Wednesday, Mrs. Maclin.

EDITH (softly).

Good afternoon, Captain Daubray.

CAPTAIN.

Till this evening, Miss Millington. (Ladies bow and leave. Colonel and Captain do not sit.)

COLONEL (signalling to waiter to bring another bottle of wine).

We'll celebrate the occasion with another bottle, Daubray; then we'll go up to my sitting-room and have coffee and cigars.

CAPTAIN.

As you like, Colonel; I'm free for the afternoon. My Aunt and her friends can't forgive themselves for being late.

COLONEL.

And yet ladies are always late, Daubray—(dropping voice) except when they are going to be married; a lifetime's observation has shown me that.

CAPTAIN.

Ha! Ha! Ha! if Aunt could hear.

COLONEL.

I must set myself clear with you, Daubray.
Your Aunt——

CAPTAIN.

Is a match-maker ; consequently she and you
don't hit it.

COLONEL.

She gives me a dose of sarcasm each time we
chance to meet. I don't retaliate in the slight-
est ; but naturally, I've rather avoided her. I
need not say, that apart from the match-maker,
I have the profoundest regard for your Aunt.

CAPTAIN.

I comprehend the situation, Colonel, thor-
oughly ; and so that you and I shall feel no un-
easiness on that score, I may tell you that I ob-
ject just as much as you do to my Aunt appoint-
ing herself a free, vexatious, matrimonial agency
for London.

COLONEL.

I'm not surprised at it, Daubray ; and candidly
speaking, if I may take the liberty—I'd like to
tell you—that the ladies of your Aunt's set go
out of their way to be unpleasant towards me.
(Waiter enters, pours wine, and falls back to his

position ; Colonel speaks and sips wine.) They don't like me. Plainly speaking—I understand them and they know it. And married men don't like me either—they resent my unmarried look of superiority

CAPTAIN.

Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! It's clear that you and I are of one mind, Colonel. (They sip their wine.)

COLONEL (convinced that Daubray is on his side, speaks with great gusto, freedom, and animation).

I'd like you to have been here last season, Daubray. Poor little Pippin, the parson—introduced into your Aunt's set. They pounced upon him, the poor little fellow, and married him to big Miss Trumper—a big *hungry* girl—five feet ten in her stocking feet!—she could eat a pudding the size of Pippin. I don't mind if a bird is given a fair chance. But this Pippin marriage was like tying a tame partridge up by both legs to the post there (imitating man holding gun) and taking a pot shot at him from here.

CAPTAIN.

Downright cruelty ! Especially when we remember that any woman is the wrong woman to marry. Women are very nice to flirt with, but (toying with glass) they should be married to the other fellows (Holding up glass and looking at it.) We bachelors sip the honey, but dodge the sting. (Empties glass.)

COLONEL.

Of course. (Drinks.) Why, being a bachelor for three weeks of the year is a married man's holiday ; and he looks forward to it all the other fifty-two weeks.

CAPTAIN.

You have seen married men meet each other ? It's this way and with this tune :—" Brother, you *have* your troubles——"

COLONEL and CAPTAIN. (Shaking hands.)

" And I have mine." Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! Ha !

COLONEL.

Call it telepathy or what we will, the idea struck us together, and therefore it must be right. Yes ! Yes ! a married man's troubles begin with the honeymoon. A man on his honeymoon looks the man who has lost a sovereign and found sixpence. My friend Belson, a connoisseur in cigars, on his honeymoon had to give up smoking. A tourist, too, had to give up walking. Up-hill, she had heart-burn ; down-hill, she had chilblains ; plain road, she sat down ! Ah ! Matrimony's no picnic.

CAPTAIN.

Why does a man marry ? That's the riddle ! Is it because where women are concerned a man is just a man—got no head ? Or is it that there is a trap for every bird, however wary ?

COLONEL.

I wouldn't like to believe the trap theory, Daubray. Besides, that's not it. Many men live and die bachelors. I believe that the scientific explanation is that men who marry mistake pain for pleasure. Now consider Relmer, who married one of the Gillyer girls; fifteen years ago I'm speaking of. Relmer said to her, "Will you marry me?" "Yes," she replied; "we'll go now."

CAPTAIN.

To the parson?

COLONEL.

No, to get a special license. Because, as she said, "You might drop dead in five minutes, Charley; we'll go now." You see women are in such terror of dying old maids.

CAPTAIN.

Did he go?

COLONEL.

Go? Since then she has presented him with thirteen children and a book on etiquette.

CAPTAIN.

Why the book?

COLONEL.

Why the kids? These women don't wait for reasons. And now she struts about spending Relmer's money as if it were her own, and telling everybody—(imitating plaintive feminine voice) “Oh, Charley is so happy! I've left him at home! He's so fond of the babies.” (In his own voice.) Clearly, the man mistakes pain for pleasure. There's no other explanation.

CAPTAIN.

Ha! Ha! Ha! Unless it be that a man can get used to anything.

COLONEL.

Not to marriage! Oh, no! not to marriage! Every man has his limitations fixed there. No man can get used to marriage. He can say that he can. That's all.

CAPTAIN.

I declined a squatter's daughter and £40,000 a year in Australia.

COLONEL.

Whew! what would make you marry, Daubray, what fortune?

CAPTAIN.

Neither a fortune nor a throne! But what I fear, Colonel, is this—we see so many clear-

headed, active-brained men toppling over into the married state, that we are forced to believe that—that other power, that influence, spell or magic, brings about their downfall.

COLONEL.

I've seen many of them led like lambs to the altar. Big Wharton—sworn against marriage; Polly Envers, the pretty actress came along. Jefferson, the Swordsman of the Grenadiers—spent fifteen years hating women; Miss Wyling put her little finger on his shoulder. Mulrede, the best boxer and wrestler in our regiment; a parson's bashful daughter smiled at him under her parasol. There's no denying facts. The love, charm, beauty, and vivacity of woman—that's our menace, Daubray.

CAPTAIN.

Aye, aye, Colonel! I believe it must be so. Cupid fires an arrow into the heart; and a bachelor—is—dead.

COLONEL (pours wine for Daubray and himself, and holds up glass).

But *we're alive*, Daubray, and *we'll* never succumb. Ha! Ha! Ha! The Ladies and Bachelors, Daubray! Ha! Ha! Ha!

CAPTAIN (holding up glass).

Ha! Ha! Ha! The Ladies and Bachelors, Colonel!

COLONEL (clinking glasses with Daubray).
Bachelors ! Bachelors !—for Ever !

CAPTAIN.

Bachelors ! Bachelors !—for Ever ! (They drink.)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

Scene.—A conservatory. Military and Civil Ball.
Military are in uniform

The conservatory is not large, and the seats in it are few. Ferns and evergreens are numerous in it, and are so arranged, that people sitting on one seat are hidden from the observation of those sitting on other seats.

Couples saunter in and out at intervals.

Just before the curtain rises, and as it rises, a waltz that can be heard distinctly but softly by audience is being played in ball-room. The instant the curtain is up, Mrs. Maclin enters through Y, and comes quickly to stage centre.

“X” is a door leading towards supper-room.

“Y” leads towards ball-room.

“M” to the garden.

Seat “T” is in the middle of the conservatory.

MRS MACLIN (enters through Y and speaking as she is coming to centre).

Oh! my heart's in a flutter! I'm going to waltz again with the Colonel. I've known him now just a month; and my first impression is

correct. He is a fine fellow—a splendid man; and I love him. And despite his scepticism, he has one soft spot in his heart, and I shall enter through that, and once inside, he'll never get me out again! I love him, and I'm going to have him! (Runs to door Y.) Oh, there he goes! he's looking for me. (Turning and coming to left centre.) Let them say he'll become fat! (In soft, confiding voice.) I think fat men are lovely! They get as amiable as doves when they have loving wives. (Louder.) And fat men have such beautiful laughs! (Pauses and thinks; then speaks.) Ah! it's a great blessing to have been married once; you know the ropes so well. Every man is a nice man if a woman knows how to take him. (Goes to door Y.) Here he comes! (Turns back; then confidingly.) I'm dying to nestle my cheek against his. (Reaches left centre directly in front of Y. Yes, despite all they say against him, I'm ready to go away with him on a honeymoon to-morrow. (She pretends to get interested in the ferns immediately on her left, as if she were unconscious of his coming; her back is towards Y. Colonel enters through Y.

COLONEL (he approaches a few steps, but stops when not half way.)

Damn me, if I don't feel a trifle embarrassed! (Fixing eye-glass and looking at her.) She's a stunning stylish woman. I had a dream about her last night. I dreamt that I had been wounded in action, and that she came to me, bandaged my wound, and held my head up,

nursing me. And when I closed my eyes, she—kissed me—a beautiful kiss!—it was simply—heavenly! However, (dropping eye-glass and advancing) my dance, Mrs. Maclin.

MRS. MACLIN (turning, affecting surprise).

Oh, Colonel! I'm so glad you've come! Do you know I've been reckoning up the days—and I find that we have seen each other twelve days out of the twenty-eight since first we met.

COLONEL.

Indeed—and in those twelve pleasurable days, Mrs. Maclin, we've not had the slightest tiff or misunderstanding.

MRS. MACLIN.

No, Colonel! not even an indication of one.

COLONEL.

(Captain Daubray, with Mrs. Tomlinson on his arm, enters through Y; both are looking in each other's faces laughing). Oh, hang it! here's Captain Daubray! Shall we go into the ball-room, Mrs. Maclin? (They go round right of seat T so that the ferns screen them from Daubray and Mrs. Tomlinson, and exeunt through Y.)

CAPTAIN and MRS. TOMLINSON (looking in each other's faces as they come down stage laughing merrily).

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

CAPTAIN.

But a married lady like yourself, Jess —

MRS. TOMLINSON (interrupting).

Knows how to keep her lips closed ; also how to open them and yet say nothing. (They reach seat T, but both remain standing.)

CAPTAIN (kissing her).

So !

MRS. TOMLINSON (in alarmed tone).

Be careful ! (Looking about her.) Are we safe from observation here ?

CAPTAIN.

Yes ! — the ferns are placed admirably. (Looking towards X, and Y, and M.) Nobody could see us until quite close ; and we'd hear anyone coming before that.

MRS. TOMLINSON (looking about her).

We mightn't though ! And it wouldn't do to be caught, for though it's the first time we've stolen away together, nobody would believe it was.

CAPTAIN.

Another specimen of botany is all we need. (He places large fern on right of seat T.) Now if we sit down we're screened perfectly. (They sit.) Isn't it a lovely nook for this ? (He kisses her)

MRS. TOMLINSON (rather loudly, and with pretended resentment).

No indeed! I shall have to be angry with you. (Laughingly, softly.) Only you do things so well, Jack, that one has to forgive you.

CAPTAIN.

Kissing is the nicest form of politeness—or this is. (He takes her in his arms and squeezes her).

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Oh! Oh! You brute! you hurt me! (Then in whimpering, caressing tone, as she tries to shove him away with her hand against his breast.) You are taking advantage of your strength, you nasty big thing. (She pouts and he kisses her again on the lips.) You don't loose time, Jack.

CAPTAIN.

No! kiss and play while the sun makes hay.

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Indeed, yes, you need to! my chaperon will be here in half an hour.

CAPTAIN (patting her cheek).

Will he, darling? Ha! Ha! Ha! Three cheers for hubby, Jess! silent ones! One! (Kiss.) Two! (Kiss.) Three! (Kiss.) Now you cheer! Your turn, Jess!

MRS. TOMLINSON (half playfully, half passionately).

Naughty (kiss), naughty (kiss), naughty (kiss) boy! Ha! Ha! Oh, Jack! Isn't it delicious? (Laughingly.) Isn't it shocking?

CAPTAIN.

And all for hubby's benefit. It puts you in a good temper for him.

MRS. TOMLINSON (laughingly).

Oh, you're the dearest--dearest scamp in London! You're a treasure of a man. (Stroking his face with her fan.) You've saved my life. I was half dead with the blues when I came here this evening; but now I'm as gay as sunshine, and as young as fifteen.

CAPTAIN.

To every *married* lady I would say, "Your ailment is—monotony. I prescribe a good lively flirtation to be taken as a tonic three times a week. And don't be afraid of taking an overdose."

MRS. TOMLINSON.

And even then to make a success of matrimony, you require a husband who isn't happy unless he is buying you—ahem!—everything.

CAPTAIN.

I wonder how you came to make *your* mistake, Jess?

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Heaven only knows! I don't. A girl before she's married is so green, that perhaps she ought to be thankful that she hasn't done worse. But, oh! I *do* get tired of Reginald. I wish that they could serve him up in the form of a curry! Now, he's only hash; and hash ruins one's digestion—makes one as cross as a bear.

CAPTAIN.

Yet if Reginald were to arrive now?

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Oh, I'd run and kiss him, and tell him that I was glad that he'd come. I know my business as a wife, Jack. Do you know what I do? I put my chin into his cheek and press with all my *might*. Ha! Ha! Ha! Its hurts him dreadfully, and the stupid thinks its love.

CAPTAIN.

Is he jealous?

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Inclined!

CAPTAIN.

Poor weak dear! It's a shame!

MRS. TOMLINSON.

But I keep him docile. I stroke him the right way. For instance, this is how I'd talk to him

about you. "Captain Daubray? Pooh! The conceited man who waltzes as if he had the stringhalt." I have to be sarcastic, you know, Jack, because Reginald is such a miserable man himself; when he walks he looks just like a starved pullet. I dare not praise a young man or a man who waltzes well because Reginald thinks that both those kind of men would squeeze a woman.

BOTH.

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Fancy Reginald knowing that! And he went down on his knees when he proposed to me. I was nearly kicking him for a fool. By the way, Jack, what would you say if Reginald Percival Tomlinson chanced to mention me to you?

CAPTAIN.

I'd affect the conciously hurt, and say to him, "I passed your wife in town the other day, Mr. Tomlinson. I was quite close to her, and I thought she was going to bow; but although she seemed to look straight at me, she did not acknowledge my recognition in any way."

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Hal Ha! Ha! Would you? Oh, you're—a—you're—a—(tapping his cheek with her fan.) You are—Jack!

CAPTAIN.

And then he'd—haw—apologize in a profuse way—haw—while all the time he'd be chuckling inwardly at my apparent discomfiture. (Imitating Tomlinson's affected manner.) “Haw ! the little woman cut him dead ! Haw !”

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Yes, Yes ! Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! That's poor silly Reginald to the life. But there, somebody must have the rod and somebody the hook in marriage ; and why should I take the hook ? Especially as Reginald seems satisfied with things as they are.

CAPTAIN.

What more could a reasonable husband ask ?

MRS. TOMLINSON.

No ! But I'm forgetting ; how did you get on in Australia ? Flirting in the summer there is so tiring that it's not fashionable, I understand.

CAPTAIN.

I did none at any time.

MRS. TOMLINSON (fanning herself very calmly and leisurely, and looking at him sideways and archly.)

And he says it as coolly as a bishop ? (Turning her full face to him and looking at him fixedly.) Did you become a kangaroo in Australia ?

CAPTAIN.

Ha ! Ha ! Don't you believe me ?

MRS. TOMLINSON (ironically).

Please inform me, Jack, is Australia a country with no girls dying to be married ? No married women dying to be kissed by a nice young man ? Eh, Jack ? Eh, Jack ? Eh ? Is there — no — feminine gender, in Australia ?

CAPTAIN.

While I was there, I studiously avoided anything that——

MRS. TOMLINSON (with a mother's petting voice).

Did ums get away ? Did ums run away as hard as its ittle legs would carry it, from naughty rude girls who'd have kissed its ittle lips and its ittle cheeksses ? It's a dearum dearums ittle Sunday school boy it is. (Tapping his cheek with her fan.) And did um say its ittle prayers ebery night ?

CAPTAIN (laughing and protesting innocence).

Really—I—didn't——

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Den it shall hab a bit ob toogar it shall ! (She kisses him.) Truly, Jack, how many hundred girls did you kiss out there ?

CAPTAIN.

None whatever ! The fact is, Jess, that I, being in love with you, couldn't bring myself to think about another woman.

MRS. TOMLINSON (leans back and sings in a light mocking tune of her own).

Oh ! Ho ! Johnnie was a soldier ;

Oh ! Ho ! Johnnie crossed the sea !

(Says.) Oh, Jack ! and you didn't find a new love !

CAPTAIN.

No, never thought of it.

MRS. TOMLINSON.

And you say it without a blush ! (At the word " without " Mrs. Remfrey enters through door X, pushes the ferns noiselessly aside with her hands, and looking at the pair, shows by her gesture and facial expression that she has found what she expected.) Kiss me, story-teller, I can't help loving you ! (Mrs. Tomlinson turns her face full to Daubray, purses her lips, and makes the sound of kissing so as to invite him to kiss her.)

MRS. REMFREY (aside).

The way to kill this sort of thing is by an awful suddenness ! (Then, gathering up her skirts so as to emit no sound, she advances tip-toe right upon the pair, whose faces are now gradually coming together, both the while making the sound of kissing.)

CAPTAIN (taking Mrs. Tomlinson's hand).

Jess, I close my eyes, and dream !

MRS. TOMLINSON.

So do I, Jack ; I think that kissing is so much nicer in the dark. (As the two faces are meeting, Mrs. Remfrey drops her hand between them, and Mrs. Tomlinson and Daubray kiss the hand simultaneously, then both spring up ; Captain goes two or three paces to the right, Mrs. Tomlinson to the left.)

MRS. TOMLINSON (as she and Daubray spring up).

My God !

CAPTAIN.

Aunt !

MRS. REMFREY (with composed, provoking voice).

Your husband has arrived and is looking for you, Mrs. Tomlinson !

CAPTAIN (aside).

I never had a kiss like that before !

MRS. TOMLINSON (with icy, deliberate anger).

Thank you, Mrs. Remfrey. It's kind of you to run my husband's errands. But aren't you discreet enough to know that I am the one woman who has the legal and moral right to obey Mr. Tomlinson, except—a paid servant.

MRS. REMFREY (loftily, as she draws herself up to full height).

Pray! pray! don't allow me to ruffle your feathers.

MRS. TOMLINSON.

Not in the least. On the contrary, you might run an errand for me as you did for my husband. You might run back to him and tell him that I am flirting here with Captain Daubray. No! tell him that I said Jack—*my* Jack.

MRS. REMFREY (not moving, and striving to compose herself).

Mr. Tomlinson doesn't take the same interest in flirting that his wife does.

MRS. TOMLINSON (sneeringly).

How disappointing for you, Mrs. Remfrey! I must scold Reginald. What we married women come to a ball for is to have a good flirtation! Where is Reginald's sense of etiquette?

MRS. REMFREY (flushing with anger).

Have you finished?

MRS. TOMLINSON.

A ball *is* flirting—dancing is preliminary flirting. With stinging insinuation.) Where were *you*, Mrs. Remfrey, when Reginald thought it best to send you here to me?

MRS. REMFREY (steps two or three paces forward, and speaks with dignity and severity).

I've listened to you ! Now you listen to me ! I take no notice of your silly aspersions. (Sternly and deliberately.) You know why I intruded ! you are sufficiently sensible to take the good lesson I've given you.

MRS. TOMLINSON (disdainfully, as she steps forward to Mrs. Remfrey).

You——

CAPTAIN (stepping instantly up to her and interrupting with whisper).

Don't quarrel ; Aunt will scream in another second ! (Loudly and offering arm.) Shall we finish our waltz, Mrs. Tomlinson ?

MRS. TOMLINSON (collecting herself)

Thank you, yes, Captain Daubray. (Takes Captain's arm.) My husband will see me in the ballroom, if—he is looking for me ! (Walking out with Captain, and looking back over her shoulder as she fires her parting shots at Mrs. Remfrey.) *If*—he is looking for me ; *IF*—he is looking for me ! (Exeunt through Y.)

MRS. REMFREY (who is very pained, stands some moments looking after them ; then drops into seat and fans herself tiredly and slowly).

Oh—h—oh—h—(Fanning herself.) My boy !—My boy !—(closing fan as she drops her hands

on her lap) running after other men's wives !— Oh !—the wicked spirit of the world !—I feel certain, however, that I've settled Mrs. Tomlinson's affair. That's a deep satisfaction. (With quick voice and manner.) I picked her out, the moment she came into the ball-room. (Slowly.) There *are* women like that ! The instant you see them you say to yourself, "Miss one of the men—you will find him in a dark corner with Mrs. X, or So-and-So." (Pause.) I don't like to say so, not even to my husband—not even to myself—but it is a fact that it's a mistake to let some women out of the harem. (Fans herself a few moments tiredly ; then stops fanning and speaks contemplatively.) Other women are born angels—Oh—Mercy !—my mother used to say—when angels are in love—a chaperon is the guardian of fools !—Oh ! (Snatches up her skirts in front and runs off through Y ; simultaneously Daubray and Edith enter through X.)

CAPTAIN (with Edith on his arm, pauses at X and glances through X at Mrs. Remfrey, who is going to ball-room).

Aunt just missed us. (They advance to centre ; then gently.) It reminds me of the evening after the tennis party. (Slowly and tenderly.) Do you remember—I kissed you ?

EDITH.

I hope that Mrs. Remfrey will not be vexed with me ; she asked me to wait her re'urn in the ball-room.

CAPTAIN (gently).

She won't be vexed.

EDITH.

She wouldn't mind me being here, I hope ?

CAPTAIN.

Oh, no ! Of course not.

EDITH.

I wanted to be with you, Captain Danbray. I was very pleased when I saw Mr. Tomlinson meet his wife and you, as you were entering the ball-room together.

CAPTAIN.

Yes, Mr. Tomlinson had just arrived ; and his wife asked me to allow her to finish the waltz with *him*. She had been looking forward to having a dance with her husband.

EDITH (sincerely).

I expect that she would feel lonely without *him*.

CAPTAIN.

Indeed yes ! She is a most attentive and dutiful wife—in fact she spoils her husband—(aside) by the way she thinks about him.

EDITH.

How nice of her! But I'm sure (turning her head this side, then that side, uneasily) that Mrs. Remfrey will be looking for me, Captain Dauray.

CAPTAIN.

Shall we go into the ball-room? She will be certain to see us there.

EDITH (sadly, regretfully).

Yes! I should.

CAPTAIN (giving her his arm and making towards M).

This way——

EDITH (stopping).

That is the way to the garden, is it not?

CAPTAIN.

Oh, no!—to the ball-room, *via* the garden. (She hesitates.) Why not this way, Miss Millington? (Very tenderly). Edith. (Exeunt, looking at each other lovingly, as Colonel Watson and Mrs. Maclin enter through Y.)

COLONEL (putting eye-glass to eye and looking after them, as he and Mrs. Maclin reach left centre).

Mrs. Remfrey interferes with Mrs. Polliver and me, but she doesn't interfere with *that*, Mrs. Maclin! Confound her! Pardon me, Mrs. Maclin,

but I must confound Mrs. Remfrey. She is trying her best to marry that girl to Daubray; and Daubray doesn't seem to be aware of it.

MRS. MACLIN.

Are you sure?

COLONEL.

The sun would alter its course if that woman wasn't trying to make some match by hook or by crook? A week after we were introduced, you remember, she contrived to leave them together on the lawn at the races. That was quite enough for me! Confound the woman!

MRS. MACLIN.

Just before we had our last waltz, Colonel, Mrs. Remfrey told me that you insulted her to-night.

COLONEL.

If I did, she deserved it! At any rate, hear my version, and judge between us. I was having a lark with frisky Mrs. Polliver, when up came Mrs. Remfrey and thrust in her nasty tricky tongue. "Oh, Colonel!" she gushes; "I'm so fond of bacon, especially for breakfast!" Mrs. Polliver, being fat, and foolish, laughed one "*OH!*" that burst her—laces—and rushed off for repairs. Then the insidious Mrs. Remfrey fluttered up to me with dove-like voice and gesture, and cooed, "Will you forgive me, Colonel? I was only giving you a hint to take me to supper

when the time arrives." I know as well as she, tha ther real intention was to make me ridiculous in Mrs. Polliver's eyes. So, I, sensibly, though not politely, answered, "I'll take you to supper when you are muzzled." And then I came over to you.

MRS. MACLIN.

Think no more about the incident, but—will you ask me to go to supper instead?

COLONEL (bowing profusely).

Mrs. Maclin! the greatest honor of my life! (Enter Mrs. Remfrey hurriedly through X; she takes a hurried, angry look round, and goes off through M into the garden.)

COLONEL.

Phew! isn't she in a fume! She raised the temperature! Phew! Temper! (Puts eye-glass to eye and walks towards M to look after Mrs. Remfrey.) † She can cool it in the arbor, or with the night dew of the roses. (Mrs. Maclin goes towards Y and standing at doorway looks towards ball-room. The Colonel, having looked after Mrs. Remfrey for three or four seconds, turns and surveys Mrs. Maclin, who continues to look through Y.) Charming woman the widow! Bless her!—in perfect sympathy with Daubray and myself! (Walking to her.) Shall we go to supper now, Mrs. Maclin?

MRS. MACLIN.

Thank you, Colonel; we shall enjoy ours lives. Look, Colonel, isn't that Miss Millington—and Captain Daubray?

COLONEL (looking through Y).

Coming through the ball-room? Yes! and coming here. It's the tip for us to go to supper, Mrs. Maclin. Come! (Exeunt through X; almost immediately enter Daubray and Edith through Y.)

CAPTAIN.

Missed Aunt again. Ha! Ha! Ha!

EDITH.

I feel that I'am doing wrong! won't she be angry with me, Captain Daubray?

CAPTAIN.

Wouldn't you put up with that, for my sake? (They sit; seat T.)

EDITH.

I love being with you; but I don't like playing hide-and-seek with Mrs. Remfrey. I feel it's—not—quite—honorable.

CAPTAIN (in persuasive tone).

Oh, you're too sensitive! (In bright tone.) Wasn't it amusing when she passed us at the dark wall? I could have (putting out his hand) touched her—she came so close.

EDITH (smiling).

She must have heard you—kiss me.

CAPTAIN (laughing).

She did ! she halted at once upon the gravel as if she had been shot ; then turned—Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! — (Mrs. Remfrey enters through Y ; and stepping noiselessly advances some steps from doorway, and gently holding ferns back, looks through them) and found another couple—while we glided away ! Ha ! Ha ! Ha !

MRS. REMFREY.

At last ! after searching the garden, the arbor, three conservatories, and the promenade ! (The Captain folds Edith to him, Edith resisting slightly. He keeps her in that position. They talk between themselves.) How beautiful it is—to look upon love ! Ah, my foster son, and my darling protégé ! two hearts will be broken if this does not end in marriage. (Daubray kisses Edith.) As her chaperon I should stop it ! (Makes a step forward, but stops.) No, as her chaperon I should allow it to go on ! It's her chance, dear angel, and if she doesn't get him she breaks her heart and mine ! Oh, Mrs. Grundy ! how we poor women do love men ! and what hypocrites you make of us, in this unnatural world ! (The Captain raises Edith's face and kisses her on the lips.) Shall I stop it ? (Hesitates.) No ! Love is a mighty power for any man to be playing with ; and when a woman loves with devotion such as hers, the man cannot help reciprocating it ! (Exit through Y.)

EDITH (disengaging herself).
Sh-h-h ! didn't you hear something ?

CAPTAIN.

No ! there's nothing but the sound of our kisses and your sweet warm lips, my Edith ! (He kisses her.)

EDITH (nestling her head against his breast and shoulder).

I can hear——

CAPTAIN.

What, my love ?

EDITH.

Your heart beating !

CAPTAIN.

Why do you listen to that ?

EDITH.

I want to hear what it is saying. (Puts her ear against his breast.)

CAPTAIN.

What does it say ?

EDITH.

Love ! love ! love ! love ! that's what it says !

CAPTAIN.

How can you so interpret the heart's beating ?

EDITH.

I love ; and love has wonderful ears and eyes
—that is how I know that you love me.

CAPTAIN (aside).

I've been dreaming.

EDITH.

Am I right ?

CAPTAIN.

Y-es ! (Aside.) I can't say no, and I half believe I do love her !

EDITH.

It is beautiful to hear that you love me.

CAPTAIN (aside).

I must watch myself.

EDITH.

Do you know what my heart says ?

CAPTAIN (aside).

I must laugh her out of it ! (To her gaily.)
Thump ! thump ! thump ! thump ! that's what
girls' hearts say—husband beaters !

So

BACHELORS.

EDITH.

Oh ! you're making fun of it ! Oh ! such a pain !

CAPTAIN.

Did my words hurt you ?

EDITH.

Terribly ! My heart has loved you for five years—ever since the day that you sat opposite me in the train to Brighton. We were strangers, but when you looked into my eyes, my heart leaped, and my love awakened. And my love grows deeper every time I see you.

CAPTAIN (aside).

This is too deadly serious in all conscience—they say that in love, the one goes mad and the other catches the infection.

EDITH (watching him and speaking very softly and pleadingly).

You—do—love—me ?

CAPTAIN (hesitatingly).

Yes !

EDITH (sadly).

You hesitate ! why ?

CAPTAIN (aside).

I must never get alone with this little girl again. (To her, looking round.) I expect that Mrs. Remfrey is still looking for us ; shall we go and find her ?

EDITH (pleadingly).

No ! won't you stay here ? Are your thoughts sad ?

CAPTAIN.

Mrs. Remfrey is looking for us ; and she'll find us ; so will the others. And they'll talk.

EDITH.

I don't mind ; I'd like the whole world to know that I love you !

CAPTAIN (aside).

The world would laugh.

EDITH.

So long as you love me——

CAPTAIN (interrupting).

Miss Millington——

EDITH (interrupting).

Why not Edith ? you called me Edith just now. And you said you loved me.

CAPTAIN (aside).

I shall be the worst cur unhung if I'm not careful. (To her.) Edith, it is foolish to love.

EDITH.

So the tongue says, but the heart says love ! love ! love !

CAPTAIN.

Often the heart does not love.

EDITH.

While it beats it says love, love, love. There comes the hour when it says love for the last time ; after that—it is dead.

CAPTAIN (seriously, reflectively).

After that—it is dead ! Those words take me back more than twenty years—to the one sorrow of my life.

EDITH.

You speak of the death of your mother.

CAPTAIN (slowly, reflectively).

I was little more than a child when she died. She had been unconscious for hours, and I had gone to bed worn out with sorrowing, and child-like had fallen asleep. I was awakened by tears falling on my face ; and then my father lifted

me up in his arms and said in a heartbroken sob, "She's gone, Jaek ; her heart has beaten for us the last time."

EDITH.

Mrs. Remfrey has talked to me so frequently about your mother that I seem to have known her quite well.

CAPTAIN.

Bless you for a sympathetic angel !

EDITH.

Your mother never did an unkind act.

CAPTAIN (aside).

Very different from her son. (To Edith.) My parents were very deeply attached to each other ; theirs was a romantic courtship.

EDITH.

It was, as it should be.

CAPTAIN (musingly).

They were in each other's thoughts every moment of the day.

EDITH.

Yes, Yes, isn't it sweet ?

CAPTAIN (musingly).

A blue sky of a marriage day, with the sun shining happiness everywhere. A honeymoon

amid fragrant orchards and lovely scenery ; mornings and evenings where the great mountains slumbered in beauty, and woke but now and then to shout that life is eternal and existence is a joy.

EDITH.

It is love itself.

CAPTAIN.

Yes, Edith—those words were written by my mother.

EDITH.

Mrs. Remfrey has told me that your mother never swerved a thought, a hair's breadth, in her devotion to your father.

CAPTAIN (aside).

Lord ! how slow I've been ! I see—Aunt has filled Edith's head with my parents' romance, and doubtless is now working to bring about a match.

EDITH.

And your father was equally true to her. (Mrs. Remfrey enters on tiptoe through Y, and advancing as before, pushes the ferns aside and listens.)

MRS. REMFREY (aside).

Eavesdropping is a sneak's business ; but I shall go crazy if I don't listen.

CAPTAIN (aside).

I'll question Edith. (To her.) Aunt has told you this story of my parents very often?

EDITH.

Yes, and she has told me of her love for you too.

CAPTAIN.

Yes ! Aunt, having no children of her own, has been the best of foster-mothers to me, and I return her tender regard.

MRS. REMFREY (aside).

Oh, you dear boy ! I believe that he has proposed to her ; they're sitting and talking as if everything were arranged.

EDITH.

Your Aunt speaks so lovingly of you.

CAPTAIN.

And Aunt is very fond of speaking of my parents' happy marriage, and of the events that led up to it?

EDITH.

Yes ! and she says that the reason of their happiness was that each was ideally true to the other.

MRS. REMFREY (aside).

I'm sure its settled ! I'll go away and cry with joy. (Starts to tiptoe out, but halts as Captain speaks.)

CAPTAIN.

And has Aunt said anything about you and me ?

MRS. REMFREY (impulsively darting forward).

Oh, here you turtle-doves are ! (They rise confusedly.) I heard your question, John, as I came in, and what I say is this : Heaven sent this dear girl to you. (Seeing the Captain's forbidding look.) Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! (Puts her hands over her face and falls into seat.)

CAPTAIN (apologetically).

(To Edith.) You must forgive my Aunt's conduct, Miss Millington ; if you will kindly excuse me I will go and find my partner ; I am engaged for the lancers. (Exit hastily through Y.)

EDITH (heartbrokenly).

Oh, Mrs. Remfrey ! Oh, Mrs. Remfrey !

MRS. REMFREY (bursting into tears).

Don't scold me, child. I'm a meddling consequential fool like most women of my age !

EDITH (kindly).

Don't insult yourself, Mrs. Remfrey.

MRS. REMFREY.

I do and I should. Captain Daubray now believes that you and I have conspired and plotted for the purpose of marrying you to him.

EDITH (hotly).

Mrs. Remfrey ! he'll never think that of me, I'm sure !

MRS. REMFREY.

He'll believe it to be designed on my part if not on yours. A man like him who has travelled the world over and seen a great deal of human nature—and human chaperons—my dear ! look how convincing are appearances !

EDITH.

Don't cry, Mrs. Remfrey ! don't worry about appearances ! Unless Captain Daubray truly loved me, I'd never wish to marry him—not even—if—I—died ! (Buries her face in her hands and sobs silently but with her whole body trembling.)

MRS. REMFREY (sobbing hysterically).

I've spoilt everything ! I'm a horrible idiotic nuisance !

EDITH (conquering herself).

Sh—h—h, Mrs. Remfrey ! you'll go into hysterics in a minute ! Do come into the garden and calm yourself.

MRS. REMFREY (rises ; then hysterically).

It is very kind of you, dear, to care for me when I'm the—(sobs) the—(sobs) the—murderess of your happiness !

(Edith and Mrs. Remfrey, arm in arm, go out through M ; and when just outside they are passed by the Colonel and Mrs. Maclin, who, arm in arm, come through the garden to enter the conservatory. They now enter through M, Mrs. Maclin being sparkling, and the Colonel (exceedingly jaunty, self-assured, and gay. Two or three steps inside the conservatory they disengage arms ; and the Colonel, putting his eye-glass to eye, stands and looks through M towards garden. Mrs. Maclin, the while, looks at him with loving, admiring eyes. Lancers strike up.)

COLONEL (with tinge of curiosity and concern).

(Clearing his throat.) Hum—m—m ! (Then airily.) As I'm a sinner ! it was ! as I'm a sinner, it was Mrs. Remfrey !

MRS. MACLIN.

With Miss Millington !

COLONEL.

And weeping !

MRS. MACLIN.

Miss Millington seemed to be comforting her !

COLONEL.

My enemy in tears ! I've often noticed that people who treat me badly get a bad time themselves afterwards. I wonder what is the matter ? (Mrs. Maclin goes to door Y, Colonel immediately

follows her, and both look towards ball-room.) I see Daubray there dancing with Mrs. Polliver!

MRS. MACLIN.

Something's happened! Shall I go and inquire!

COLONEL (profusely).

If you would be so kind, dear Mrs. Maclin! (Exit Mrs. Maclin through M. The Colonel looks after her.) Gad! I think the widow is a bit touched on me—I do! (Striking his chest.) Vanity! Vanity! Bah! Vanity! (He is alone in the conservatory, and while the widow is away, he puts in his time gazing towards the garden after her; stepping over to Y and looking towards ball-room; dancing scraps of the lancers figures to the music that can be softly heard—interspersing it all with the following speeches. He is decidedly festive, but not intoxicated to the least vulgar degree.) Ah, she's a dear soul, she is; I came here to enjoy myself, and, by Jove! I'm doing it! I've had a famous supper—and enough champagne—enough—not too much. Ha! Ha! Enough is an art! A rosy time I'm having! The widow is a grand woman—doesn't object to anything reasonable—had a tip-top cigar while walking round the paths with her. Nice name she has—Bessie. I guessed it, second try. I suppose it is too good to hope that some fiasco has occurred in trying to hook Daubray! Ha! (striking his chest) that's too good to hope for! that's champagne talking—I wish she'd come back. (Walking to door Y.) I wish—hullo! here she is! Ah! she's

speaking to Daubray. She looks glorious under the lights! She makes a man's heart warm! By thunder! I'll kiss that woman before the night's over. (Comes to left centre.) I wonder if she would now? I wonder? By Gad, I'll try! I've a very good notion that she would. (Taking coin out of his pocket.) Twice out of three. (Tosses coin.) Heads she will. (Catches coin in left hand, claps right hand over it.) What is it? (Raises right hand.) She will. (Repeats toss, catch, and hand clap.) What is it? (Raises right hand.) She will. (Quickly.) She *WILL*—she *SHALL*! (Turns to meet her, but stops as she enters through door Y, with her finger on her lip, with an air of mystery; she tiptoes up to him.)

MRS. MACLIN.

What do you think?

COLONEL.

Lord! what! I've no idea! (Aside.) Her breath is as sweet as a baby's.

MRS. MACLIN.

I oughtn't to tell you.

COLONEL (in inquiring apologetic voice).

Oh—h—h? (Then assuringly.) But it doesn't matter, Mrs. Maclin! You are one of us, you know! It's dead the moment you say it!

MRS. MACLIN (coming temptingly close to him).

Guess!

COLONEL (aside).

Lord! she's irresistible! (To her.) Lord knows! Mr. Remfrey eloped—or——

MRS. MACLIN.

Miss Millington—Captain Daubray—complete bungle!

COLONEL (drawing back in astonishment).

NEVER!

MRS. MACLIN.

Yes!

COLONEL.

How?

MRS. MACLIN.

Mrs. Remfrey played interloper in a love scene, and ruined everything.

COLONEL.

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho! Ho! What a lark! Gad! it couldn't be better! It's too funny for anything. Let us sit down, Mrs. Maclin, and congratulate ourselves. (They sit; seat T—she fans herself calmly, looking straight before her; he watches her.) They admitted it too?

MRS. MACLIN.

They confided it in their own way; they couldn't help themselves. They've gone home. (A pause; she looks in front of her and fans herself, coquettishly smiling; he watches her with undisguised admiration; she glances at him and away again a few times; then she points with her fan to the back of her shoulder next him, and speaks with coquettish tone, look, and manner.) Colonel! is my dress torn, just here somewhere? (She nestles up to him.)

COLONEL (putting eye-glass to eye and scrutinizing her dress).

No—Mrs. Maclin.

MRS. MACLIN (moving herself coquettishly).
Sure?

COLONEL (looking again long and carefully).
No!

MRS. MACLIN (looking at him invitingly and speaking in innocent voice).

Isn't it?

COLONEL (looking again).

No! (Aside.) Damn it! what does she mean? she's teasing me to death. I must kiss her—I must venture!—Richard Dudley Watson!—advance! (He puts his arm round her and tries to draw her to him; she struggles, and gets upon her feet crying out.)

MRS. MACLIN.

Oh, Colonel! Colonel! whatever has come over you? (She breaks partly away; he, rising, catching her by each wrist and thus holding her) She, with head thrown back, and face averted, keeps him at distance, dodging his repeated efforts to kiss her.) Colonel! No! Don't No! I won't! Let me go! Colonel! I can't let you kiss me! I'm strictness itself!—no man has kissed me for ten years!

COLONEL.

Gad! It's time you commenced again then, Mrs. Maclin! Let me give you a nice new beginning! you'll be bound to enjoy it!

MRS. MACLIN.

Colonel! you're very rude! Let me go! let me go! No! no! (They pause, each being out of breath; he keeps hold of her wrists; there is silence; she drops her fan purposely and speaks in supplicating voice.) Bother! that's my fan! Please pick it up, Colonel!

COLONEL (laughing).

No, no, Mrs. Maclin! I can pick that up after I've kissed you. (He tries again to kiss her.)

MRS. MACLIN.

I'll never allow it; it would spoil our friendship.

COLONEL.

Nonsense! it would make it even sweeter.

MRS. MACLIN.

No! Colonel! No! Friendship keeps kissing out! It's distinct! When we begin kissing, we begin loving, and when we begin loving, we begin marrying!

COLONEL.

Lord! I must kiss you!—if I die a married man!

MRS. MACLIN.

Heavens, Colonel! what if I took you at your word?

COLONEL.

Take me! but give me the kiss!

MRS. MACLIN.

You don't mean that, Colonel! you'd regret it! I'll be your true friend, and not allow it! No, Colonel! S—h—h—h! Quick! there's somebody coming! Quick! Let me go! (She wrenches herself free and runs almost to door Y; then stops, turns, and laughs.) Ha! Ha! Ha! there's nobody! Ha! Ha! I beat you that time, Colonel! And you won't catch me again! She runs off, waving her hand, he making a vain effort to catch her. He comes back and picks up her fan. Then, sitting down, he looks at fan.)

COLONEL.

She's a darling! She wrought wonders in me while I was holding her. It was delicious to feel it was she, of all women. And her dear plump arms! Oh, I was intensely happy! I was loving her the whole time! There's such go in her! such life! such spirit! And how beautifully she conducted herself! Kind, firm, let me go to the farthest inch that friendship would allow; but not a point farther. She's right, of course. I should not attempt to kiss her against her will. (Pause, then slowly.) A strange feeling came over me as I was trying to kiss her; she seemed to have been with me all my life—a dear, good, noble, considerate friend. (Quickly.) By thunder! I do think a lot of that woman! I'd repose any confidence in her!—I would—I would. (Pause; then Mrs. Maclin enters through door Y, comes forward a few steps, and looks round fern.)

MRS. MACLIN.

Colonel, if I come in, will you behave?

COLONEL (rising).

Mrs. Maclin! I cannot tell you how grateful I am to have this chance to tender you a thousand apologies. I am most sorry that I should have given you cause for offence.

MRS. MACLIN (advancing).

I am not—exactly—offended, Colonel; but you ought not to have done what you did.

COLONEL.

I understand—it is most kind of you to forgive me. I wouldn't lose your friendship for the world.

MRS. MACLIN.

Colonel, look at my face. It is too red to go into the ball-room.

COLONEL (aside).

What lovely cheeks! I could kiss them forever! (To her.) And the redness is my doing!

MRS. MACLIN.

Never mind! I forgive you, though I wouldn't forgive anyone else. But now we'll sit here and talk sensibly. (They sit.) Sha'n't we, Colonel?

COLONEL.

Yes! (Offering fan.) Your fan, Mrs. Maclin

MRS. MACLIN.

(Thank you. Enter Mr. Fotherway; Mrs. Maclin immediately spreads her fan before her face.)

MR. FOTHERWAY.

The next is ouw dahnce, I beweeve, Mrs. Maclin.

MRS. MACLIN.

Pardon me, I think you are mistaken.

MR. FOTHERWAY.

Pardon my suggesting it, but if you look at youw pwogwame you will see that I am kwowect.

MRS. MACLIN.

I shall not look at my programme, Mr. Fotherway.

MR. FOTHERWAY.

Thanks awfully! (Going.) One of us is awfully wude. (Exit through Y.)

MRS. MACLIN.

I couldn't dance with him, Colonel—I'm tired. Besides, I dislike these young puppies of civilians who keep pestering married women, and women like myself, at social affairs. When I was a girl, I used to say that I'd sooner be a soldier's slave than a civilian's queen. And though many a fine soldier is lost in a civilian, I'd say the same now, and feel proud of myself while saying it.

COLONEL.

An old soldier like myself is highly complimented by such sentiments, Mrs. Maclin.

MRS. MACLIN.

Old ! How old are you, Colonel ? I'm not much younger than you surely, and I'm only thirty-three.

COLONEL.

I'm a *little* older than that.

MRS. MACLIN (quickly).

A day ? (Colonel laughs, and shakes his head.)
A week ? (Colonel repeats head-shake.) A
month ? (Colonel again repeats head-shake.) A
year ?

COLONEL.

Seven years. (Waltz begins ! the audience can just hear it)

MRS. MACLIN.

No ! then why do you look so young ? (She nestles up to him in the most tempting manner. Oh, I know ! because you've remained a bachelor. Colonel, I wish that I were a man—a bachelor too—your mate—wouldn't we have had some fun together ?

COLONEL.

Yah ! we would ! we would indeed ; we'd have been the two best friends on earth ! (Aside.) I can feel my arm kissing hers.

MRS. MACLIN (cooing and nestling).

Friends who were ever dear to each other.

COLONEL (aside).

This is more than living, breathing man can stand! I'll kiss her! I'm certain! I'll swear I'll kiss her in a minute! She won't get away this time!

MRS. MACLIN (closer than ever).

We're the best of friends now, aren't we?

COLONEL.

Yes, and always will be, please the Lord! But had you been a man, Mrs. Maclin, we'd have smoked together — dined together — laughed together—and——(Sighs.)

MRS. MACLIN.

We do that now, Colonel, don't we? At least, I don't smoke; but I enjoy watching you.

COLONEL (aside).

I'm kissing her with every nerve of my body!

MRS. MACLIN.

But I know, Colonel, what you mean. We could have been bosom companions. (Throughout this speech she keeps tempting him, until at

the close her lips are only a few inches from his.) We could have begun on one of those grand days; the days that make you feel that you will live to be a hundred. And after that, all day long, we'd have hither and thither, sipping this, enjoying that, with never a care, and never a regret. (Gaily.) Heigh ho! fol de rol de ray! (Musingly.) And then our evenings, evenings of brightening fires, of friendly musings, of cosy chats, of heart's ease, of dearest confidences; with songs that I'd sing, and airs that I'd play, interspersed between. And then, as the night grew older, we'd sit close by the fire together, and dream the dear old dreams all over again, and live again! The mirth! the gaiety! the happiness of it all! While every story, as we told it, would be flavored with the aroma of rich old wine! Yes! Yes! Colonel, had it been so, our lives would have been lives of happy days and sweeter nights.

COLONEL (laying his hand on hers, and then taking her hand in his).

Only you would (in broken solemn voice) have had to be a woman—for—all—that—to—happen—Bessie! Won't you—won't you—let—me kiss you? Bessie!

MRS. MACLIN.

My Colonel, if you do, I am a woman—and I shall love you; so sincerely, so deeply that I would give up all else in the world to become your wife!

COLONEL (in broken voice).

You ! You !—*love me* !—Bessie ? Let me kiss you, Bessie ! I—love—you ! (Takes her in his arms and kisses her.)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

Scene.—Mrs. Remfrey's Drawing-Room.

Mrs. Remfrey's garden is seen to great advantage through the drawing-room windows and through doors X and Y. The garden is beautified by bright moonlight. It is a mild evening, and Mrs. Remfrey is dressed for the opera. Captain Daubray is in evening dress.

"X" and "Y" are two large doors facing garden.

"A" is a side door near "X"; and "B" is a side door near "Y."

MRS. REMFREY (goes to door Y, and holding back curtain looks out.)

How sweet the air is! What a lovely still night—a night that makes one think—a night for sentiment, for hopes, for dreams! Such a night, for a young man to join his heart to a dear girl's. (Turns and walks to centre.) Yet, now that I've sent for John, I'm at my wit's end what to say to him. (Pause.) And (looking at time) in half an hour Edith will be here for me to take her to the opera. I *do* hope that I've arranged it for the best. (Walks up and down

pondering.) I have been cogitating—this side, that side, forward, backward—during the seven days and nights that have elapsed since the ball. And I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that John is the average bachelor, who would seek happiness in illicit love. It is the way—few men seem to have genuine principles until they are influenced by wife and children. And John, with the passionate, impetuous blood of the Daubrays throbbing in his veins, is predestined to come to grief unless he becomes happily married. (Pause.) I have a presentiment of a distressing interview. (Pause.) If it comes to the worst, I shall speak as plainly to him—as—I—should. But I'm on pins and needles. (Pause.) I shall trust to a woman's best weapons—truth, love and patience ; and thus try to unite my beloved protégé and my beloved nephew.

(Enter Captain through A ; Mrs. Remfrey goes up to him and kisses him.)

MRS. REMFREY.

Good evening, John.

CAPTAIN.

Good evening, Aunt. I have come at your request ; but I cannot stop long ; I've an appointment. (They sit ; there is a pause.)

MRS. REMFREY.

I've not seen you John—since—that painful scene.

CAPTAIN.

I am sorry that it pained you, Aunt. But you brought it upon yourself, through trying—to hustle me into matrimony.

MRS. REMFREY.

Are you angry with me ?

CAPTAIN (testily).

No. I used to get angry when women first tried to marry me. That was fifteen years ago, when I was a mere little boy. I wouldn't think of getting angry now ; I'm too used to husband hunters—the world is full of them. Aunt, I was no sooner down with my wound in South Africa, than five hundred amateur nurses dolled themselves up to nurse me into health and matrimony.

MRS. REMFREY (controlling her anger).

You think, then, that I intruded purposely on Edith and yourself ?

CAPTAIN.

I haven't concerned myself with that question, Aunt. Whether the intrusion was deliberate or accidental is of no consequence—I shall not marry Miss Millington.

MRS. REMFREY (slowly and collectedly).

It is the love I have for Edith and for you that caused me to intrude. Have you thought of Edith's love ?

CAPTAIN (unsteadily).

I--Aunt? (Covers his face with his hands; after some seconds, drops his hands, sits up, and says with a struggle.) A man can live happily without love.

MRS. REMFREY (aside).

He said it with a struggle. I think he loves her. (She comes behind his chair, and placing her hands around his forehead, speaks.) John dear how hot your head is!

CAPTAIN (in softened tone).

Rather, Aunt, how cool are your hands!

MRS. REMFREY.

And warm my heart for you.

CAPTAIN (kindly and half laughing).

You dear, kind, foolish Aunt; what an old saying!

MRS. REMFREY.

None the less true. Come, won't you let me talk of your future to you? You know that your good is what I wish you.

CAPTAIN.

It is unnecessary to mention that, Aunt.

MRS. REMFREY.

Then you'll talk with me about your future?

CAPTAIN (rises).

With you if with no one else, Aunt. But consider this—you know my income—I can command any pleasure that men desire. Is it likely that I would be the fool to risk my life of enjoyment and liberty for the sake of having a girl hanging on to my coat tails. Think of it! If you were a man like myself, you wouldn't contemplate marriage for a moment. (Pause; then slowly and half angrily.) Why should I, a free and independent bachelor, sacrifice my liberty, and fall into line with the married old fossils?

MRS. REMFREY.

John!

CAPTAIN.

I mean no offence to anyone, Aunt. But I know myself best. My mind is quite clear and determined; I shall go alone to the end. If our country has more wars in my time, I can do my duty—serve my ambition—best as a bachelor. If mine be a time of peace—then with my income I can want nothing but the freedom to enjoy it. So for me—in peace or war—no ties!

MRS. REMFREY.

John dear, a strong man must love something—either a virtue or a vice. Won't you choose

the virtue? Marriage is what we make it. The people who fail in their marriages fail in everything they undertake. Your marriage would be a perfect success.

CAPTAIN.

My romantic Aunt, it is no use, I assure you ; not if we discussed the pros and cons of it for a year.

MRS. REMFREY.

If *I* were a man, all I'd ask for in the world would be the love of a sweet girl. But no ! *you* follow the Colonel.

CAPTAIN.

Why not marry some sweet girl to the Colonel ?

MRS. REMFREY (angrily).

Marry a girl to the fag end of a wicked life !

CAPTAIN (humorously). -

Mrs. Maclin does not think that of him. The story round town is that she played a lone hand at the ball and won him.

MRS. REMFREY.

The alert widow can take better care of herself.

CAPTAIN.

It's said then ; and pretty generally too.

MRS. REMFREY.

I haven't seen her since the ball—she's coming here to-morrow ; but I should say that it's hardly worth while to ask her the truth of it. It's gossip, I'm sure.

CAPTAIN (humorously).

All the same, there's that chance that I mightn't be following the Colonel.

MRS. REMFREY.

I meant that you had not been very moral, John.

CAPTAIN (walks away and speaks aside).

Alas ! no ! I'm too kind to be quite moral. (Turns to her, expostulatingly.) Moral as men go, Aunt !

MRS. REMFREY (rises).

Ah, John ! I wish I could let you see yourself as you are—prejudice makes you blind.

CAPTAIN (testily).

So you prescribe marriage as an eye-opener ? Aunt !

MRS. REMFREY.

If you were married, you would reach the happiness of marriage.

CAPTAIN (half humorously).

My dear, well meaning Aunt, I wouldn't reach for the impossible.

MRS. REMFREY.

John, do be earnest with me. Haven't you sometimes felt inclined, a little—to get married ?

CAPTAIN (humorously).

Earnestly, Aunt, thousands of times—just a little.

MRS. REMFREY.

And why did you restrain yourself ?

CAPTAIN (quietly).

Because a man's life is spent in conquering the fool within him.

MRS. REMFREY.

John, let me entreat you to be earnest with me. And have you never, once, asked a woman to marry you ?

CAPTAIN (laughingly).

Aunt, I wouldn't say a thing so much to my disadvantage.

MRS. REMFREY.

Disadvantage! what name would you give to that affair of Mrs. Tomlinson's? I helped you there. I stopped you.

CAPTAIN,

Ha! ha! ha! helped me? Stopped me! A woman's logic, Aunt? I can't help laughing.

MRS. REMFREY (deeply pained).

That is going too far, John. Your uniform is the badge of honor; isn't the soldier as good as his coat?

CAPTAIN (seriously).

I deserve your censure, Aunt. And I accept it. I'd have made a fool of myself, but for you. But then, I'm a mortal man and prone to love.

MRS. REMFREY.

Then why not love a dear girl who would bring you honor and happiness.

CAPTAIN.

There you go again, Aunt. Begin how we may, the chapter ends—John, get married; or, get married, John; or, get John married.

MRS. REMFREY.

It's a man's social duty to marry. That I wish you and Edith to marry each other ; yes, it's my dearest wish. Why do you object ? A good girl is an angel, especially when she is loved. How *can* you object ?

CAPTAIN (stumblingly).

I—have—no—reason. But surely I'm a free agent. (He moves away from her and speaks aside.) It's more serious with me than Aunt suspects—I've never been so shaken!

MRS. REMFREY.

You must have some affection for Edith. As soon as you came into the room that night you looked for her.

CAPTAIN (aside).

I never loved before and never suffered.

MRS. REMFREY.

Won't you answer me, John ?

CAPTAIN (aside, suddenly resolved).

A good exhibition of brutality and it's ended. (To Mrs. Remfrey.) To speak truthfully, I looked for her with the eyes of a connoisseur.

MRS. REMFREY (shocked).

John—and you approached her!

CAPTAIN (with assumed levity).

With the confidence of long practice.

MRS. REMFREY (hotly).

And afterwards, you, a man, led her to believe——

CAPTAIN.

That a conservatory is a good place to spoon in.

MRS. REMFREY (agitatedly).

You kissed her, fondled her in your arms——

CAPTAIN (with assumed indifference).

As a brother—as a duty. She returned it—as a sister—as a duty.

MRS. REMFREY (angrily).

For mercy's sake abandon that cruel nonsense. You led her to believe you loved her. She wouldn't have spooned or flirted. No, don't wave your hand and laugh, John. You led her to believe you loved her. I know it. Edith has not told me. She loves you too well to betray a syllable of what occurred between you. (Pause; then she comes up to him and speaks heart-brokenly.) And you—*don't* love—her?

CAPTAIN (resolutely, after a desperate effort).

No! (Walks some steps away ; then aside.)
The word nearly choked me.

MRS. REMFREY (coming to him and speaking
with intense anger).

Then you meant to deceive her. Answer me,
John! (In rising voice and anger.) Before your
God I command you to answer me—was it in
your mind to make Edith your—

CAPTAIN (cut to the quick ; then sternly, sharply
interrupting).

Stop!—No!—before my God! *NO!*—I am not
the best of men, but I am not the worst. (Ab-
ruptly.) This discussion has lasted long enough,
Aunt ; I am going. (She intercepts him.) Let
me pass, Aunt! I won't submit to your tyranni-
cal interference in my affairs any longer. It's
only out of courtesy and regard for you that I
have submitted.

MRS. REMFREY (hysterically and beginning to
weep).

Oh, John, stay! I must explain myself. I
spoke hastily, madly. My words went farther
than I intended. I know that I have no right to
interfere, but I'm your foster-mother, and you
don't know how deeply I have your welfare at
heart, how wisely I am counselling you. A little
while ago I spoke to you as kindly as I could,
and you answered me with jests and mockery.

CAPTAIN.

I apologize, Aunt.

MRS. REMFREY (recovering herself and coming up to him).

Kiss me, John. I know that you are worthy of her. (He kisses her. Looking into his face.) There's a tear in each of your eyes, John! (Pause.) John! while we have been talking, hasn't a struggle been going on in your heart?

CAPTAIN.

I'd be a brute, Aunt, if I were not touched by your kindness and good wishes. (He walks away and speaks aside.) I'll break down like a fool if I don't mind. (Turning to her and forcing himself to almost his usual gaiety.) Aren't we bachelors hen-pecked?—Aunt! Hen-pecked! hen-pecked!

MRS. REMFREY.

How, John?

CAPTAIN.

Every woman whom a bachelor meets tries to marry him to herself, or to some other woman. (Mrs. Remfrey puts her handkerchief to her eyes three or four times.)

CAPTAIN.

Don't cry, Aunt—because I am too sensible to marry—because I know too much to marry.

MRS. REMFREY (pleadingly, as she puts her handkerchief away).

Are you hardening yourself again?

CAPTAIN.

Aunt, you surely wouldn't try to worry me into matrimony—against my will and inclination. I cannot become a married man. A married man is so ridiculous, prosy, cut and dried. He must conform regularly to character, conventionality, and rules. While a bachelor can be what he likes, when he likes—a devil-may-care, a devil-go-anywhere—free to do or undo, as the mood takes him. No! No! In peace or war—no ties!

MRS. REMFREY (still excited, but controlled, firm, and decisive).

There are two moods before you now, John—two ways of life—the libertine and the man of honor. You must choose one or the other. I know the strength of money—the first power in the world, and your passions and your money will, if you like, make you almost independent of law, morality, principles, conventions—everything. This night is the crisis in your life. You

stand at a point from which these two ways of life go forth. Which do you choose? (Pause.) The libertine or the man of honor—which is to wear the soldier's coat? which is to hold the commission of the Queen? (Pause.) Shall I choose for you, John?

CAPTAIN.

But, Aunt——

MRS. REMFREY.

There are no buts, no problems. There are only settled rules and laws of life that men and women must obey. Marriage is no subject for argument! When you are as old as I, you will regard it as I do.

CAPTAIN (drily).

It seems to me that marriage is all argument.

MRS. REMFREY.

The argument of love, of nobility, of pure living; the argument of good against evil.

CAPTAIN (stubbornly).

I don't think so; I consider it the oldest way of looking foolish.

MRS. REMFREY.

John, John, your speeches are prompted by selfishness! Oh! the selfishness of men!

CAPTAIN (angrily).

Selfishness? Aunt, don't try to humbug me with the word selfishness, even if you do humbug yourself. Selfishness! Go to the Derby—a million of money—men's money on the women's backs. Go to a Court ball—*men's millions*—in the women's jewels, and fal-fals. Men's love for women is the goose that lays the golden eggs. Woman's selfishness makes men slaves. Look at the nations, the millions upon millions of men, who toil heavily, under unhealthy conditions, all their lives merely for the sentiment they feel for women. Selfishness! Merciful Heaven! woman is the incarnation of selfishness!

MRS. REMFREY.

You don't know enough of a woman's world to judge her. You are caught and deceived by the superficial. Women are fond of dress and ornament—it's their weakness or their strength --it's a question which. But neither show nor riches can buy a woman's love.

CAPTAIN (lightly, tauntingly).

Ha? Sure? Aunt? Think again.

MRS. REMFREY (clearly, decisively, forcibly).

As sure as Heaven rules! Money buys that other feeling that takes the place of love with the degraded and the dissolute. When you say that woman is the incarnation of selfishness, I answer yes! the bad woman. The bad woman, who rarely selects a bad man as her victim, but who, with the instinct of the weakling, fastens to the real man, the man whose veins are full of blood, whose heart is full passioned, whose inmost self is strong, and good, and true. It is not because I would save women from men that I seek to bring about marriages; but because, equally with that, I would save men from women. Ah, John! how many men who might have risen to honor, fame, or glory, have ended with that old epitaph—Delilah destroys Samson! (Pause.) Defeat, disgrace, and death! what an end to an ambition!

CAPTAIN.

Aunt, this century began with the eyes of the world upon bachelors whose success founded an empire.

MRS. REMFREY.

John! It is a marriage, a father, a mother, a family, a nation, that founds an empire; not a bachelor.

CAPTAIN (very unsteadily).

I dare say that view is as right as mine, Aunt. But rightly or wrongly I have—(stops)—the—the —(stops).

MRS. REMFREY (taking hold of his hand and pleading most tenderly).

John, a few minutes ago, I was listening to your passions and your reason combining to trick your conscience. And I prayed Heaven to help me guide you aright. Love is too serious, too sacred, for man or woman to dare treat it badly. You have loved Edith; kissed her, fondled her, changed her from the girl to the woman. You don't understand, perhaps, that a woman's love means the lasting joy or sorrow of her life. Edith loves you as no other woman will love you. Such love is the greatest blessing that can come to a man; and it comes but once in his life, bringing him the offer of sweet companionship, and long and happy years. Think, I beg you!

CAPTAIN (trying to master his emotion while his eyes are looking to the floor, and Mrs. Remfrey still holds his hand).

A woman!

MRS. REMFREY.

A joy!

CAPTAIN.

And a sorrow!

MRS. REMFREY.

No! a joy! the love of a woman—a man's guardian angel.

CAPTAIN (suddenly, as he masters himself).

Let me go, Aunt! (She releases him.) My last words on this subject. (Pause.) I came here with my mind made up to say no. And (hesitatingly) I—must — stand — true — to—my own will.

MRS. REMFREY (with deep solemnness).

Such a will is the guiding power to a man's dissolution and downfall. (Captain walks aside, motioning to her to say no more.) John, I have failed to shed light upon the blindness of your prejudices; but I have discharged my duty to Edith and to you to the best of my ability. And I'll say no more than this—and mark my words—the man who turns his back on love sets his face to grief and degeneration. (Exit, bursting into tears, through B.)

CAPTAIN (overcome).

And I am the man who knows it! All the time that I was resisting Aunt, and striving to shut Edith out of my heart, I felt myself becoming an old man. My hopes seemed to wither, my purposes to decay. I felt the struggle of love and death within me, and I cannot endure it. Yesterday, I was sure that in a soldier's life there is no room for sentiment; that if I were free, unfettered, I could fight my way to success. But last night as I came up the walk I unexpectedly met Edith; and we rushed together and kissed each other; hung upon each other's lips as if kisses were our food! And this morning as I was sit-

ting alone in the library, lost in thoughts of her, my future and myself—I had a wonderful experience. (Pause.) Out of the silence, a strong man's voice seemed to speak in my ear—"Make sure of your ambition! you are destined to go through the world—ALONE!" And instantly the hot blood surged through my body, and in my heart the voice of Edith, clear, musical, stirring as the bugle-call, answered—"NEVER!" And I arose and looked about me, wondering could another have heard it, so real was the voice! The voice of Love! (Passionately.) I love Edith! I love this heart of hearts, this woman of all women, this song, this joy, this passion of delight! (Long pause.) Yet I pause before the great step of marriage! (Long pause.) Tell me! you men who love women, and you women who love men—is marriage a dream that should never be realized? (He pauses, then turns his head and listens.) Edith's footstep? If it is Edith, the answer has come to my question, and the good God has sent her! (Pause; then Edith, beautifully dressed, enters through door Y; the moment she enters Captain speaks.)

CAPTAIN.

Oh, Edith!

EDITH (surprised and delighted).

Oh! you! (They rush together and kiss passionately.)

CAPTAIN (passionately).

Edith! I shall love you for ever with all my heart. Will you be my wife?

EDITH (with voice full of life and joy).

Yes!—yours for ever!

CAPTAIN.

(He kisses her; then with her head reclining on his shoulder he turns to audience.) Love is young, and strong, and beautiful, and marriage is its hope and consummation.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

Scene.—Colonel Watson's Sitting Room.

Morning of the Prince's Levee.

The room is very comfortably and tastefully furnished ; a typical well-to-do bachelor's apartment, where a man and his friends can smoke, talk, think, read, drink, as they will. A few pieces of statuary are prominent ; and pictures, too, arrest the eye. There are no small chairs in the apartment ; there are roomy arm-chairs, lounges, a sofa. Everything bespeaks ease. The Colonel is in uniform, without cap and sword.

(Colonel Watson is discovered seated. He thinks for several seconds ; then suddenly springs up with upraised fist, and stepping forward, speaks with loud, angry defiance.)

COLONEL.

I won't do it! (More angrily.) I *won't* do it! (Vehemently and word by word.) I—will—*NOT*—do it! (Drops fist, pauses and sits down. Then in more reflective voice.) And if I don't? (Springing up as before.) Well! I won't! (Sitting down.) And that's all about it. (Taking out cigar and lighting it.) I'll have a smoke. I

can think more camly after I've had a few good whiffs. (He blows several big clouds ; then stops smoking and speaks bitterly, reflectively.) As Schopenhauer says, other péople are the cause of all our troubles. (Gets up and walks rapidly up and down, taking great whiffs out of the cigar. Stops dead, and speaks self-reproachfully.) Whenever does a man get sense ? Here I am again at forty—in another mess—and—so far as I can see at present, no way out. (Defiantly.) But I shall *not* do it ! and if I don't ? the law ! And be damned ! Damned to the law that is ! I couldn't damn Bessie ! And yet if I could only bring myself to damn Bessie, I should be free. Would I though ! Oh Lord ! I'm—I'm—I'm—(flinging cigar into fire-place) I'm maundering ! that's what I'm doing ! and what the devil for ? (Angrily, harshly.) I've just got to figure out the costs. Of course it will be settled by law. I must await proceedings ; and hand any communications from her without opening them to my solicitor. (Sighs.) Same old game—same old story—same old judge—same old jury—same old pay, for the poor devil of a man. Anyhow, it's settled ; and I'm glad of it. Now a fresh smoke. (He lights up and stretches himself upon sofa ; then softly and meditatively speaks between the whiffs.) There's a dreamy, soothing feeling about this cigar ! (Closing his eyes and speaking sadly.) Ah ! I can hear that last waltz now—ah, Bessie ! a few steps, Bessie ! in the conservatory ! on the lips, Bessie. (With heart-sigh.) Good—bye—Bessie. (Springing up and hurling cigar away.) I've gone mad ! I—I—oh, I wish that I had never

met her—a charming, dear woman! I can't bear to act shabbily towards her, she is such a good soul. And now, after exchanging a confession of love with her, I'm acting like a bounder, and flinging her off with a shrug of the shoulders. (Fiercely.) By thunder! if I saw another man treat that woman like that, I'd knock him down for a cur and a blackguard! I would! There's no denying it. Virtually, I'm in honor bound to marry her. But I can't marry! A bachelor like me—impossible! It's too absurd! (Pause; then regretfully.) But what will she think of me? She's too good and high-principled to sue me for breach of promise. No! she'll treat me with contempt. Yet, I'd sooner lose the respect of the whole world than the regard of that woman! If I had worked for years to make myself perfectly miserable, I couldn't have succeeded better. It should never have happened! It's a most *unfortunate* occurrence! It's a most *unfortunate accident!* ACCIDENT! that's what it is. And really *I* am not to blame; I was so anxious for Daubray that I lost myself! and lost Daubray too—I see his engagement is announced this morning. (Laughing in desperation.) Ha! Ha! Ha! *I* will be firm. *I* shall laugh at Daubray! Ha! Ha! Ha! What nonsense it is! Certainly, she says she loves me! Ha! Ha! Ha! That's the way a clever woman always takes a man down! (Regretfully.) That's not right; I ought to kick myself for speaking so of her! I'm too old a bird to be caught with chaff; that's the way to put it. (Lights fresh cigar.) All the same, Richard Dudley Ferguson Watson, it's the closest call you ever had in your

life—yes, in all fairness I will allow that to the widow—she just missed hitting me fair in the heart. (Smokes.) What a good time I had with her! there's no doubt she did affect me seriously. (Puts cigar aside.) Such an out and out good chum that woman is—so kind, so warm, so comforting—the world would be a blank if I were not sure of seeing her to-morrow; seeing *you* to-morrow. Bessie, I—I—I—I—oh, Bessie! By Heaven! I'm in love and there's no other way to say it! No, I'm not—yes, I am—a sea trip might save me; a good shooting excursion! It's an awful position for any man to be in—my love here; my liberty there; I'm a loser whichever side I take. So I'll keep my liberty. Oh! I'm very, very sick! Her kiss is heavenly! (Quickly, as if seeing the secret of everything.) That's it! I should not have done that! that sealed my trouble! Oh, she's lovely to kiss! Oh, why don't I love her more and be happy! Oh—but—oh why haven't I a mind? But—but—(suddenly, fiercely) DAMN IT! why didn't I break my leg on the morning of that ball? (In slow, reflective, mollified tone.) Dear, generous, simple-minded Bessie! who could be angry with her? Not I, I love her. Yes! whether I marry or not, and of course I shall *not* marry, I can say that this trouble was brought about entirely by myself; and she is not to blame at all. (Captain Daubray knocks and speaks.)

CAPTAIN.

Colonel! are you there?

COLONEL.

Yes! come in, Daubray, (Aside.) I musn't betray myself to Daubray! or should I though? No! (Enter Captain in full uniform)

CAPTAIN (pauses at door and speaks aside gaily).

If I mistake not—succumbing, but damning! Anyhow, I've come to push him in, and *in* he's going. (Aside, while advancing.) I feel the least bit awkward all the same. (He advances to within a few feet of the Colonel, and stands at the same distance from the footlights as the Colonel does. They both look at each other and away again, each being self-conscious and sensitive of the other. They look thus, several times; and each time, first one and then the other essays unsuccessfully to speak.)

CAPTAIN.

Colonel!

COLONEL.

Daubray!

CAPTAIN.

Colonel!

COLONEL.

Daubray!

CAPTAIN (half laughingly).

Colonel!

COLONEL.

Daubray! what the devil are you going to say to the fellows?

CAPTAIN (gaily).

Merely that I have changed my views! What else can I say? What will *you* say, sir?

COLONEL (loudly, defiantly).

I? I?—I'm not going to be married!

CAPTAIN.

Well, sir, all London, on information received from the busybodies of the ball, say that you are engaged to Mrs. Maclin!

COLONEL (with martial burble).

Sir, it's not what all London says! It's what I say—when my liberty's at stake!

CAPTAIN.

It *is* at stake then, Colonel? Ha! Ha! Ha!—you've let it out!

COLONEL (looking half beaten).

Daubray, you have detected so much that I must take you into my confidence.

CAPTAIN.

I am conscientiously bound to declare, sir, that I haven't the right to accept your confidence.

COLONEL.

Every right.

CAPTAIN.

I may be an undesirable influence.

COLONEL.

Every way desirable. (They take each other's hands.) Between man and man, I have absolute faith in you, Daubray, irrespective of your views past or present. (They release hands.) Will you sit down?

CAPTAIN.

Thank you. Colonel. (He sits; there is a long pause; then Colonel hums and hahs as he attempts to proceed.)

COLONEL.

Hum! Hah! Hah! Hum! Hum! Daubray—there are occasions in every man's life when the best thing that he can do is to ask for, receive, and follow, the advice of a trusted friend! Hm!—Hm!—do you consider it wise for a man ever to confess?

CAPTAIN.

I consider that genius is only the power of confession.

COLONEL (agitated).

Then I don't mind confessing to you, Daubray—since you think so highly of it—that I—that I—have a cigar, Daubray?

CAPTAIN.

Thank you, Colonel.

COLONEL.

And a match.

CAPTAIN.

Thank you. (Lights up and smokes.) You were saying, Colonel, that you—that you——

COLONEL.

Was I, Daubray?

CAPTAIN.

Yes! that you——

COLONEL.

Oh yes! that I——

CAPTAIN.

That's it! that you——

COLONEL.

That--a——

CAPTAIN.

Have you forgotten what was in your mind, Colonel? We were speaking of your reported engagement to Mrs. Maclin; and—incidentally—you were going to confess something.

COLONEL.

Hm! yes!

CAPTAIN.

You can trust me completely—it's the unexpected that happens!

COLONEL (furiously).

That I will *never* marry!

CAPTAIN.

A big thing to say, Colonel, you know. Man was born to trouble.

COLONEL.

Take care that you don't wake up with that text every morning! (For answer, Daubray sings a few bars of "The voice that breathed o'er Eden," and whistles part of a Wedding March; the while, the Colonel eyes him attentively.

COLONEL.

Your audacity staggers me! You revolutionize so much easier than I! But don't you think that the Wedding March, and "The voice that breathed o'er Eden," is too much of a come-down for us? Too *awful* a come-down for us! *US? US?* Bachelors, Daubray! Bachelors, for ever!

CAPTAIN.

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ze king of ze bachelors! Ze celibate of London! Monsieur! he say it of himself.

COLONEL.

That's it! That's it! We shall pass into history as the bachelor joke; all London will laugh at us!

CAPTAIN (gaily).

No! No! London will give us a smile of sympathy.

COLONEL.

That's just where the screw comes in. As bachelors, we are superior to London; as bachelors, we can laugh over all London.

CAPTAIN.

Yes, but instead of that, London will have the laugh at us; and say that men who think, and think, and think, about marriage, think them-

selves into it; and once in, find that they cannot think themselves out again! Ha! Ha! Ha! The whole army will come to see us told off.

COLONEL (furiously).

By thunder! *I'll never marry!*

CAPTAIN.

Certain?

COLONEL (storming).

Certain! (More loudly.) Invincible! (Still louder.) Defiant!—Bachelorism is the one great principle of my life! and I'll never depart from it! never! never! never! — NEVER! NEVER! NEVER!—I'll see Law, London, Man, Woman, and Army—DAMNED first. (For answer Captain smokes in a composed, self-assured manner; then, as the Colonel turns towards him, he very coolly knocks the ash off his cigar, and speaks.)

CAPTAIN (coolly).

I am not impressed.

COLONEL.

Confound it, Daubray! what are you so cool and cocksure about?

CAPTAIN.

Colonel, I passed through this stage of yours some days ago. It is the final bachelor storm

that precedes the calm of marriage. A mighty change is going on within you—you are changing from a bachelor to a married man!

COLONEL.

You frighten me, Daubray; I was afraid that I was in love when I awoke this morning; I was afraid to admit it to myself! Go slow! you are my trusted friend! I am going to follow your counsel, remember; it's a big thing for one man to do by another.

CAPTAIN.

I deeply feel the honor and responsibility. And therefore, Colonel, as your trusted friend, I tell you, that you need not marry.

COLONEL.

What?

CAPTAIN.

Mrs. Maclin would release you from your engagement if you desired it.

COLONEL.

Dear, generous Bessie! just like her. But how do you know, Daubray?

CAPTAIN (puts down cigar, rises, and comes up to him).

Because she told me so in as few words, when she gave me this letter, last night, for you.

COLONEL.

Thank you. And she—told you that ?

CAPTAIN.

With the tears in her eyes. No woman could be fairer than she.

COLONEL.

Daubray, I could no more act dishonorably towards her than I could run away with the whole regiment watching me.

CAPTAIN (aside).

I think there's little chance of you getting away. (To Colonel.) You haven't read the letter, Colonel.

COLONEL (reads letter).

“ My dear Colonel,—I have been thinking of you every moment since I last saw you, and dreaming of the happiness that awaits us. But I believe it will be a struggle for you to resign your liberty ; and even if you have only a mis-giving, you have but to ask me, and I will be your true friend and release you from our engagement. Always I shall love you.—Bessie Maclin.” (Pause, then in broken voice.) Always I shall love you—dear, generous, considerate Bessie ! There's not another woman like her in England—not in the world. I cannot understand unselfish love like hers ! Previously, it was beyond my imagination even.

CAPTAIN.

She loves you, worships you, Colonel. She'd consent to anything that would make you happy, for then, as she says, she'd be happy too.

COLONEL.

I am not worthy of her love.

CAPTAIN.

A noble woman; what a triumph for a man to be loved by her! (Colonel is too upset to speak. A knock comes at the door.) There's a knock at your door, Colonel.

COLONEL.

See who it is, Daubray; but don't let anyone in. (Captain opens door.)

SERVANT (handing letter).

Post, sir! letter for Colonel Watson, sir.

CAPTAIN.

Thank you. (Shuts door.) Letter, Colonel.

COLONEL (very quietly).

You open it, Daubray, and read it to me, will you? I'm too upset.

CAPTAIN.

(Aside.) From Aunt ! (Reads.) " Dear Colonel Watson, --I have been crying with vexation on account of my unladylike conduct towards you on the night of the ball. Being a woman, I took unfair advantage of you, and said what I dare not have said were I a man. I wish to offer you my unreserved apologies ; and trust that you by extending your hearty friendship towards me will enable me to forget that I offended you. My husband joins me in hoping for your friendship ; as he admires your courage and other good qualities just as much as I do. — Your constant friend, Annie Remfrey."

COLONEL (overcome).

Kindness and compliment, where least expected.

CAPTAIN.

You have misunderstood Aunt.

COLONEL (in broken voice).

I should apologize to her; not she to me. Oh, it's no use my holding out any longer, Daubray. I'm desperately in love with the widow. And I am proud to admit it! Since I have known that good woman, new feelings have been born within me. I turn gladly from that bachelor world—the world of cold, of gall, of cynicism, cheerlessness, brutishness, and scepticism. (Pause.) After all, what the heart of a man craves for, from the

time he changes from youth to manhood, is the love of a good, true woman. I love Bessie, and so surely as I love her, with her consent I'll marry her.

(CAPTAIN.

Bravo! well spoken, Colonel! Your hand! (Humorously.) But what will London say?

COLONEL (humorously).

Let London say—what it likes! Do you think I care for London or its cackle when I have that woman at my side? Let London laugh!—it will make me stick to her all the more!

CAPTAIN.

Bravo, Colonel! you deserve a *good* wife. Ha! Ha! The man who has enjoyed his own society for forty years should be compensated for the awful loss of it.

COLONEL.

Ha! Ha! Ha!—and speedily. I shall ask her to name the day, the moment I see her.

CAPTAIN.

Colonel, Mrs. Maclin and Miss Milington are in my sitting-room now, waiting for me to take them to the Levee. Mrs. Remfrey is to join us there.

COLONEL (as he hurries out).

Splendid ! We'll all go together. (Exit.)

CAPTAIN

The Colonel is brimming with joy ! Ah ! some changes have come about since he and I first smoked together in this room. I never thought it possible then that I could have gone over, much less he—every fibre of his body was pledged to single doctrines. But there—every bachelor has his match ; what he wants is the luck to find her. What a gloriously happy game it is—this game of falling in love and getting married—this game of saying no !—and doing—yes !—of beginning with, I won't !—and ending with—I will ! Now from the sanctuary of the widow's arms, the Colonel's laughing at the bachelor, the foolish misguided fox—the bachelor. And no wonder !—he who has that prize, the love of a woman's heart, is a king among men. (Enter Colonel Mrs. Maclin and Edith ; Daubray meets Edith and talks with her.)

MRS. MACLIN (nestling against Colonel).

As you wish, my dear, as you wish. Either a six months' tour or settle down in our own home at once ; I shall be quite happy so long as I am with you. For I want to think about nothing but you, my Colonel, and to feel sure that you will love me all my life. I do love you ; I'd have pined away, if you had taken back the promise that you gave me in that first sweet kiss.

COLONEL.

My Bessie, I could not live without you. (She places his cap on his head and buckles his sword upon him.)

EDITH (to Captain).

They are going to be married the same day as ourselves, and at our church.

MRS. REMFREY (running in overjoyed as Mrs. Maclin puts finishing touches to Colonel's sword-belt).

I didn't find you in John's room, so I came here. (She kisses Edith, Mrs. Maclin, Daubray, and Colonel.) I'm nearly mad with delight! I don't know which one to love best! (She kisses Colonel again.) Oh, Colonel! my dear Colonel! the best bachelor in England makes the best married man!

COLONEL.

And the happiest and the proudest—with my dearest friend—John Daubray.

MRS. REMFREY.

Love is life's grand argument.

MRS. MACLIN.

And happy marriages the secret of our country's greatness

COLONEL.

May the women of England ever have the goodness, charm, and beauty, to change our bachelors into loving husbands!

CAPTAIN.

Bravo! Colonel! Hurrah! We are going to love and be wise. Join hands all! (Mrs. Remfrey takes the centre; Mrs. Maclin on her right, Edith on her left; the Colonel next to Mrs. Maclin; and Captain Daubray next to Edith. Then the Captain shouts with great spirit and ringing voice.) Three cheers for Matrimony! (They all take a step forward, raising their right hands, the ladies waving handkerchiefs, the Colonel his cap, the Captain his helmet.)

COLONEL and CAPTAIN.

Hip! Hip! Hip!

ALL.

Hurrah!

COLONEL and CAPTAIN.

Hip! Hip! Hip;

ALL.

HURRAH!

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BACHELORS.

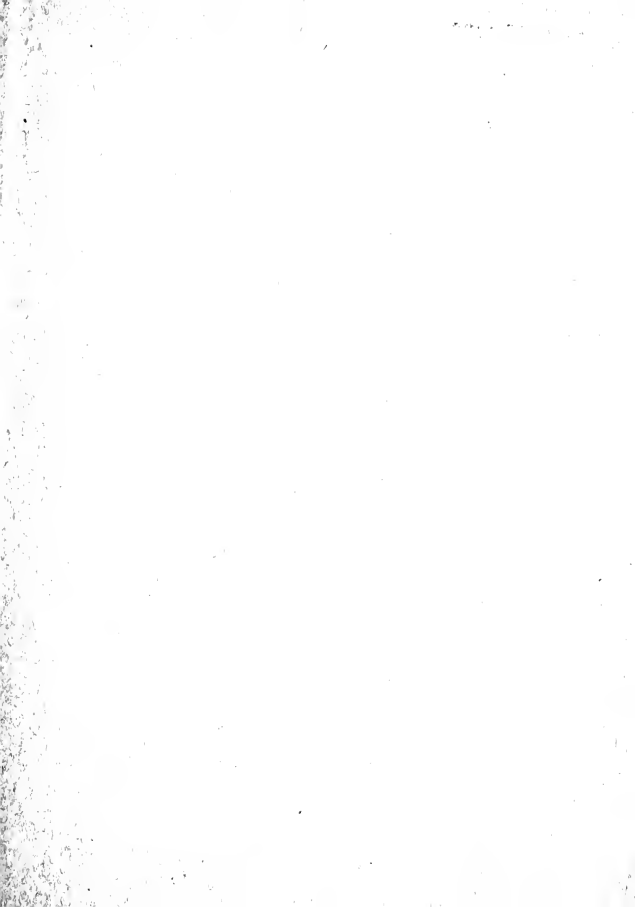
COLONEL and CAPTAIN.

Hip! Hip! Hip!

ALL.

HURRAH! HURRAH! HURRAH!

CURTAIN.



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